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ABSTRACT

This story, one of three in The Sexuality Decision-Making Series for Teens, contains several different possible plot lines depending on the decisions the reader makes for the characters at varous "choice points." The study focuses on the theme of birth control: when Christy and David decide to have sex, they have to face the responsibilities that go with that decision. Decisions about whether to use birth control and which kind, going to a clinic, what to say to parents, and dealing with the complexities that accompany their decision are some of the issues addressed. In one of the plot lines of the story, Christy thinks she is pregnant. The story models the following behavior: ways to bring up the subject of using birth control in advance of a romantic situation; ways to talk to parents about the subject of birth control; ways for both partners to take responsibility; ways to insist on using birth control even if the partner is resistant; ways to find out more about birth control; and ways to overcome the fear or embarrassment of going to a clinic or buying condoms. (TE)

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Taking Chances with Sex

Taking Chances with Sex

Christine DeVault

Illustrated by Ian Akin

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The Sexuality Decision-Making Series for Teens

by Christine DeVault

Too Soon for Sex?
Abstinence

Taking Chances with Sex
Birth Control

Don't Let It Get Around
Sexually Transmitted Disease

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Publisher's Note

Some of the material in this publication is controversial, due to the nature of the subject matter covered. This book was developed with the specific intent of influencing adolescent sexual behaviors. Therefore, it may be most appropriate for use in communities in which there are high rates of teen pregnancy, sexually transmitted disease or substance use. In addition, the laws related to teaching sensitive topics in the classroom vary throughout the country and will have an effect on what may be taught and how it is presented. We recommend that teachers understand district policies and state mandates and obtain parental, school board and administrative support before using the material.

Taking Chances With Sex is a story in which you get to make choices for the characters.

It works like this:

You meet Christy and David. They've been noticing each other in drama class and when a friend introduces them their romance takes off. Their love and strong attraction to each other forces them to make choices about sexual involvement and birth control. Each time they have to make a choice, you step in and make it for them.

Your choice takes you to a different part of the book, where you'll discover the outcome of your decision. You continue to make choices as you read, until you reach the end. When you finish, go back and make different choices. There are many stories in the same book.

You become part of this story as you make choices for Christy and David.

1

"Come *on*," Christy's friend Lisa Rios demanded, pulling on her sleeve. "It's cold out here. What's wrong with you?"

"Lighten up, Lisa, okay?" Christy Jacobs responded. "I'd rather wait for you out here. Anyway, you said you wouldn't be long."

"I still don't understand why you don't come in for just a min—"

Lisa was interrupted by a cheerful shout from the second story of the apartment building. "Hey! You two are gonna freeze out there. Come on up." It was Lisa's boyfriend Danny Velásquez.

Christy rolled her eyes, heaved a sigh, and followed Lisa into the building and up the stairs.

Danny met them at the door. "Hi, babe. Hey,

Christy. How ya doin'?"

"Hi, Danny. How're you feeling? You don't look as bad as Lisa made it sound."

"I think I'm gonna live. This is the first day I've felt like getting out of bed. Come in, come in. Don't be shy. You know David, right?" He motioned toward the kitchen table where his brother sat with piles of papers in front of him.

David looked up, over the rims of his glasses.

"Hi," said Lisa.

Christy smiled weakly. Oh no, she thought, feeling as though the roots of her hair were blushing bright red, just what I didn't want.

"Whatcha doin'?" Lisa looked over David's shoulder at the forms and brochures.

"College applications. What a headache. I have to write a different essay for each one. And you should see the topics. At least the financial statements are easy. I just fill in zeroes everywhere. Savings account—zero. Parents' income—almost zero. Stocks, annuities, dividends...dividends? Are they kidding?"

"You'll get a scholarship though," Lisa assured him. "With your brain."

David flashed her a grateful smile.

He's so cute, thought Christy. I can't stand it.

Lisa turned to Danny. "I got your stuff here. Your math book, history stuff, and English

He's so cute, thought Christy. I can't stand it.

assignments. Ms. Aron says she hopes you're feeling better and you should call her if you have questions about the work. She wrote her number here."

Danny took the books and papers from Lisa. "I guess I'm supposed to thank you, huh?"

"Danny, you want to pass these classes or not?"

"Don't whine. I'm just kidding. Listen, come in to my room and see what I've been doing."

Lisa looked at Christy and winked. "Have you heard this one before? 'Come and see what I've got in my bedroom, my dear.'"

"Sounds interesting," Christy said.

"Ha, ha. Seriously, Lisa, come and look at my painting. I can't move it yet." As Lisa moved to go with him, Danny added, "You can come too, Christy."

How do I get into these things? Christy wondered. She didn't think she'd feel comfortable following Lisa and Danny into his room. They might want a little privacy, in spite of Lisa's comment. She wasn't sure if she wanted to stay where David was either. She was recovering from the initial embarrassment of suddenly being face to face with the object of her secret fantasies, but she wasn't at all sure how he felt about her being there.

"You can stay here if you want," David said,

motioning to a chair at the table. "You want some juice or something?"

"Uh, oh, okay, thanks." Christy took off her jacket and sat down. Danny and Lisa disappeared down the hall. Christy took a few deep breaths. Get a hold of yourself, girl, she thought, feeling as though she was being carried along on a rushing tide over which she had no control. I didn't even want to be here, but I am. I'm alone with *him* and he's getting me a glass of orange juice. So what's the big deal? You drink the juice, make small talk, Lisa will come back and you can make a break for it. Simple.

She tried to watch David without staring. As she'd noticed at cross-country practice and in drama class, he moved easily and naturally. She watched him as he poured the juice. Tall, dark and handsome about sums it up, she thought.

"Is orange okay?"

"What?"

"I thought you were giving the juice a weird sort of look."

"Oh, sorry. It's fine." She felt herself blushing again as she took the glass. "Thanks." She took a sip, but when she tried to swallow, the juice refused to go down. She covered her mouth as she began to cough, but drops of juice escaped and spattered across David's papers.

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"Should I hit you on the back or something?" David was at her side, looking concerned. He handed her a napkin.

She shook her head. "No...thanks...I'm all right." She wiped her hand and began to dab at the spots on the papers. "Oh, I'm so sorry. I'm so embarrassed." This is the most humiliating moment of my entire life, she thought.

"You sure you're okay? Don't worry about those." He pushed the papers aside and leaned over her, peering into her face. "It's just paper, okay? But I'd feel bad if you died on my kitchen table."

She forced herself to look at him and saw only concern and friendliness in his dark eyes. She smiled tentatively. "I'm not gonna die, although that sounds like a good idea. I hope I didn't wreck your applications." She turned back to the papers, looking for wet spots.

David stood up, got another napkin, and sat back down next to Christy. "A little orange juice isn't going to stand between me and college. The only thing standing between me and college is me."

"Are you really worried? You get straight A's, don't you? Everybody knows you're one of the smartest people at Rosemont."

David smiled. "Thanks.'But Rosemont's just

one high school out of thousands. The competition's really tough. And they look at more than just your grades."

"Well, I guess I'd be worried too, in your place, but I don't think you have anything to worry about. You've got the grades, you're on the track team, you write for the school paper, you've been in school plays...." Don't overdo it, big mouth, she said to herself. She tried another sip of orange juice. This time it went down.

"Thanks for the vote of confidence." She seems to know a lot about me, he thought, as he began organizing the papers into separate stacks. "So what do you think of the play we're going to do in drama class?"

"*The Man Who Came to Dinner?* It's pretty funny." At least he noticed I'm in the class, she thought. "What part are you going to try out for?"

"I thought I'd give Bert Jefferson a try. You know, the newspaper guy."

"That's a major role. You'd be perfect for it too. You even look the part."

"Thanks. How about you?"

"Oh, I don't know, I thought maybe I'd go for the sister part. It's not very big, but it's probably about all I can handle."

"Why don't you try out for Maggie?"

"You mean the secretary? No way. That's the

romantic lead. I don't think I'm the type."

"What do you mean 'the type'? I think you'd be great."

"Oh no. I'm way too short and...well, you know...ordinary. Besides I don't know if I could remember all those lines."

"There's nothing that says Maggie can't be short. I think you'd be great."

"Really? I never even thought of it."

"Well, think of it, okay? I'll help you go over the lines if you want."

Christy felt a bit overwhelmed by David's enthusiasm. Just 'cause he thinks I could do it, she thought, doesn't mean I can. Still, if David got the Bert Jefferson part (which he probably will) and I got Maggie Cutler, then we could fall in love (on stage at least)....

"Earth to Christy. You still here?"

She shook herself. "Yeah, I'm here. I guess I kind of spaced out. I was just thinking...." She looked at David and felt her cheeks begin to grow warm. Oh please, she begged silently, don't blush. She stood up quickly, picked up her glass, and walked to the sink. Just relax, you idiot, she told herself as she rinsed the glass. He's obviously a nice guy. Maybe he even wants to be your friend. So calm down. She turned around. "I'll think about it, okay? I'll go home and read the play

again and think about it."

"You do that." He smiled and peered more closely at her. "Hey, are you going out for cross-country, too?"

Christy forced herself to smile back casually, "Yeah, I thought I'd try it. I went out for gymnastics last year, but I wasn't very good at it. My friend Tracy talked me into trying cross-country. She says it's like you're mainly just competing against yourself. So I thought I'd try it to see if I could get in better shape." She felt herself blushing and looked down.

David smiled and nodded. "I thought I'd seen you at practice. I wondered who Tracy's friend was."

Christy looked up briefly. "I'm not very good."

"Don't say that. The important thing is that you're doing it."

Then Lisa and Danny came down the hallway and into the kitchen, laughing, tickling each other, and bumping into things.

"If I catch your cold, Daniel Velásquez, I will kill you," Lisa said with a giggle. To Christy and David she added, "He's trying to give me germs."

"We can take you by the dry cleaners on the way home," Christy suggested. "That should take care of any problem."

"Ha, ha," Lisa said. "Chris, you should see

Danny's painting. It's really cool."

There was a scraping sound from the apartment door. Danny went to open it.

"Hi, Mom." He took a bag of groceries from her arms.

"Hi, honey. You look like you're feeling better."

Irene Velásquez bustled into the kitchen. "Well, it looks like we've got a houseful. Hi, Lisa. How're you?" She ruffled David's hair. "And who do we have here?" She looked at Christy.

"Oh hi, Irene," Lisa said. "This is my friend Christy Jacobs."

"Pleased to meet you, dear," she said, shaking Christy's hand firmly. "It's nice to meet the boys' friends. Especially if they're as short as I am."

Christy laughed. "It's good to meet you. This is a nice place you have here."

Mrs. Velásquez glanced around the tiny apartment. "It's home anyway. The boys have been a big help in fixing it up." She began to take the groceries out of the shopping bag.

"Well," said Lisa, "we were just about to leave. My mom's going to start wondering where I am."

"It's nice to see you. Maybe you'll come to dinner when Danny's over his cold. You come too, dear," Mrs. Velásquez added, looking at Christy.

"Oh, okay, thanks," said Christy. She smiled. This lady makes friends fast, she thought. "I'll see you, David."

"Right. Think about what I said, okay?"

"I will. Bye, Danny." She reached for her jacket.

Lisa said her goodbyes and they scurried out of the apartment, down the stairs and into the crisp fall afternoon.

"Now that wasn't so bad, was it?" Lisa demanded.

"It was okay," Christy said. You liar, she told herself, it was anything but okay. It was horrible, humiliating, frightening, exciting, intriguing, and even, actually...fun.

"Put a pot of water on for the spaghetti, will you, Dan?" Mrs. Velásquez tore open a package of ground beef and plopped it into a skillet.

"Aww, Mom, can't Dave do it? I'm not feeling so hot."

His mother stared at him from under half-closed eyelids. "Right. Well, you put the water on and then you can go lie down. David has to get the table cleared off."

Danny sighed and began to rattle among the

pots and pans. He pulled a large kettle from the cupboard, filled it halfway with water, thumped it down onto the stove and quickly left the room.

"How're the applications coming along?" David's mother asked when they were alone.

"Okay, I guess. I have to write some weird essays though."

"You'll do fine, I'm sure." She busied herself chopping onions for a few moments, then observed, "That was a nice girl with Lisa. Is she someone I should know about?"

"Oh, uh, I don't know, Mom. She just came by 'cause Lisa was coming to see Dan."

"Oh. Somehow I got the impression there was more to it. So it was just my imagination?"

"Lighten up, Mom, okay?" Man, he thought, why'd I have to get such an observant mother?

Mrs. Velásquez smiled as she tossed the onions into the skillet and stirred them with the sizzling meat. "I don't mean to be nosy. I do get a little worried sometimes 'cause I think maybe you're getting too serious and spending too much time by yourself. Not that I expect you to be as outgoing as your brother. I know you've got real different personalities, but, well, speaking as your mom, I just want you to be as happy as you can be."

"I know, Mom. I didn't mean to snap at you."

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David had stacked the papers neatly and put them at the far end of the table. He got out three placemats and the dishes and silverware they would need. "Christy's nice. She's easy to talk to. And...I'm not sure...but I think maybe she likes me."

"I think maybe she does," his mother agreed, turning to hide her smile.

When Christy got home, she was relieved to find that she had the house to herself. Her stepfather, Preston Montgomery, was a building contractor. Although he had his office at home, he was usually out on the job until dinner time. Christy's mom, Elaine, handled the business end of things. In the six years that she and her second husband had been married, their business had become moderately successful and enabled them to live comfortably, if not lavishly.

Christy's four-year-old brother Robbie went to preschool every weekday until 2:00. Christy spent a lot of afternoons entertaining Robbie and helping her mother. While she didn't think much of the domestic work, she enjoyed helping with the business—typing invoices and purchase orders and keeping the accounts. She was also learn-

ing to do carpentry and was justly proud of the built-in bookcases she'd created for her room. She loved using power tools, especially the shrieking table saw that always seemed anxious to devour a finger or two. She was also a skillful driver and was waiting impatiently for her sixteenth birthday so that she could get her license. Academics, however, weren't Christy's strong point. She didn't study a lot but managed to get by on her innate creativity and quick wit.

Assuming that her mother and Robbie must be out shopping, and relieved not to find any notes directing her to start dinner or fold laundry, Christy settled down to read the part of Maggie Cutler from *The Man Who Came to Dinner*. As she read she began to chuckle. This is really a funny part, she thought. Maybe I actually could do it. Most of the speeches are pretty short so I wouldn't have to remember a lot all at once. And David said he'd help. I'll do it, she was thinking as her mom pulled into the driveway. She went outside to help bring in the groceries.

After dinner, Christy called her friend Tracy.

"All right!" said Tracy. "I think you'd be super in that part. But there's still something I don't get. You said David Velásquez talked you into it. I didn't even know you knew David."

"I didn't. But I do now. I guess. Sort of."

"Want to tell me about it?"

Christy related the events of the afternoon, adding her own dramatic highlights where she felt they were needed. "I mean you should've seen me, Tracy. You would've died. There I am, practically choking to death, spraying his college applications with orange juice...."

Tracy was convulsed with laughter. "You are one walking natural disaster. I don't know how you do it."

"Me neither," Christy replied modestly. "One thing I know is I'm glad I let you talk me into going out for cross country. Think of all the opportunities we'll have to stare at you-know-who's gorgeous body."

"Yeah. Well, if anything develops between you two, I'll expect a commission. Listen, I've gotta go. I have to finish an English paper."

"Oh...okay...." She hesitated.

"What is it?"

"Oh, nothing much. I just wanted to talk a little more. We haven't even mentioned Tom Johnson."

"Tom who?"

"Oh, come on, Tracy. He likes you a lot. I can't understand why you won't even give him a chance."

"Like I told you before, Christy, it's nothing

personal. I like Tom fine, but there's no way I want to be involved with a guy right now. Not even perfect Tommy."

"But it wouldn't be like it was with Vince, Trace. I know it."

"Actually, you don't know it. Nobody knows. So let's not talk about it anymore, okay?"

"Yeah, okay. I'm sorry, Trace. I didn't mean to get you upset."

"It's okay, Chris. No problem. I'll see you tomorrow, okay?"

After she went to bed that night, Christy thought about the events of the day. How lucky it would be, she thought, if David actually liked me. But there's no point in getting all excited. Even if he did like me, there's no guarantee it would last. Look at Tracy. She had been so much in love with Vincent. She would've done anything for him, and it turned out he was seeing someone else all along. But that won't happen to me. If I fall in love it'll be with my eyes open. I hope.

During the following weeks Christy and David began to spend time together. David helped Christy prepare for the part of Maggie Cutler,

which she won hands down. As expected, David got the part of Bert Jefferson. "We should change the guy's name to Berto Hefferson, though," he said. "Since he's just become Latino."

Just as Christy had fantasized, the play gave David and her ample opportunity to be together. And to her delight and amazement, the attraction seemed to be mutual.

David, for his part, was more than delighted. He was stunned. Although he'd been out with a few girls in the past, his quiet personality and reputation as a "brain" had usually served as a barrier to keep girls away. They assumed he was stuck up or were intimidated by him. And he hadn't a clue as to how to overcome his shyness. He could be outgoing on stage, but in close encounters he was usually self-conscious and speechless. But Christy had changed all that.

David was beginning to find her in his thoughts at the strangest times—in the middle of a calculus test, while mopping the floor at the pizza parlor where he worked on weekends, or at 4:00 in the morning waking him out of a sound sleep. He wanted to get to know her better, but wasn't quite sure how to proceed. He'd asked a few girls out before. The awkwardness of asking and the prospect of being turned down had been nerve-racking even though the girls had usually seemed

glad to go out with him. But he hadn't liked any of them as much as he liked Christy, so there was a lot more at stake now.

And then there was the problem of transportation. Danny would probably want the car to go out with Lisa, which meant they could double date or flip a coin for it. A double date would be okay, David thought, but he wanted to be alone with Christy. It was hard to get to know someone with another couple practically sitting in your lap, even if half that couple was your brother. Especially if it was your brother. All this worrying about the car and I don't even have a date.

David thought about asking Christy out when he saw her in drama class or at cross-country practice, but there always seemed to be too many people around. He thought the telephone might be a safer bet.

So pick it up, he told himself, staring at the phone as if it were a slimy toad. The worst thing that can happen is that she'll say "No, thank you." Or laugh in your face.

Naw, she wouldn't do that. C'mon, you chicken, call!

What did David do?

Choice Point 1A

If you think David **called** Christy to ask her out

turn to page 20.

Choice Point 1B

If you think David **didn't call** Christy

turn to page 26.

continued from p. 19

David took a deep breath and reached for the telephone. Don't think, he told himself, just dial. (He'd had the number memorized for over a week.)

Christy answered and was her usual funny, friendly self. As she chattered away, David began to relax.

"What are you doing this weekend?" she wanted to know.

"The usual. I have to work Saturday and Sunday nights. How about you?"

"I promised my folks I'd watch Robbie on Saturday. I guess Tracy'll come over. Pretty exciting, huh?"

"You doing anything Friday?"

"Uh...I'm not sure. Why?"

"I was wondering if you'd like to do something. Go to a movie or whatever." That wasn't so bad, he added to himself.

"Oh. Well. In that case, I guess I'll be busy."

His heart stopped.

"With you," she added.

"Oh. Whew. You scared me for a minute there."

"I'm sorry. I thought you'd know I was being silly."

"I guess I'm kind of paranoid."

"About what?"

"Oh, I don't know. That you won't like me as much as I like you, I guess."

She was quiet for a moment. "I don't know how much you like me," she said slowly, "but I like you a lot."

"I'm smiling," he said. "Can you hear it?"

"Yeah, I think so. Me too."

Friday night arrived quickly. Except for brief glimpses, Christy and David hadn't seen much of each other during the past couple of days. David had a lot of homework and Christy had a lot to do for her parents—part of the bargain she had struck with them to get the use of the car.

Danny and Lisa dropped David off at Christy's. "Why don't you come with us?" Lisa suggested. "It'll be fun. We're going to see *Nightmare, Part Eight*. I don't know why you want to go to that boring movie with all that singing and stuff."

"Thanks, but no thanks, Lisa," said David. He sprinted up to Christy's door.

She opened it as he was about to knock. "Hi. Come on in. I'm almost ready." She disappeared down the hall.

Christy's parents greeted David in a friendly way.

23

Christy's parents greeted David in a friendly way. When Christy's stepdad heard that David liked musical comedies he offered to lend him some from his collection of videotapes.

"Thanks," said David. "That's real nice of you." He couldn't quite bring himself to say that his family didn't have a VCR.

Christy's little brother Robbie tugged on his arm. "Come see my toys. See my room," he demanded.

David went with Robbie and admired his cars, dinosaurs and building blocks. On the way out of Robbie's room, he bumped into Christy. "Hi," he said, "I'm getting a tour." He touched her shoulder. "You look great."

"Thanks. So do you."

To Robbie's disappointment, they left right away. "The car's a little hard to get into reverse," Christy's mom advised.

"Don't worry, Mom. I can tell him all about it. I've driven it a million times."

"A million times, huh?" David asked as they climbed into the well-used compact station wagon.

"Well, a thousand maybe. Sometimes I exaggerate. But they won't let me drive unless they're with me. I can't wait till I'm sixteen and can get my license—only two weeks to go."

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"Somebody short's been driving this," David said, fumbling for the seat adjustment. "That's better." He started the engine and pulled out onto the street.

"Mostly just my mom drives this 'cause my dad has the pickup. Now, *that's* fun to drive. It's got a lot more guts than this pile of junk. Oops, sorry," she amended, patting the dashboard. "I didn't mean it."

When they got to the theater and had parked the car, David turned to Christy, "Listen," he said, "I just want to tell you I'm really glad you came."

"Me too. I was hoping you'd call. I was trying to think how I was going to ask you out if you didn't ask me first."

"I've been wanting to go out with you since we met."

Christy looked at him. "Incredible. It's hard to believe, but it's great." She shook her head in wonder.

"Why is that so hard to believe?"

"Well, I mean, look at you! You're so...so...I don't know—smart, good-looking, nice, all those things."

"Whoa," he said, holding up his hand.

She went on determinedly, "Plus you're a senior. There're a lot of smarter, prettier, older

girls around."

"Older, maybe. But you shouldn't put yourself down. I think you're really pretty and you're obviously smart even if you don't get straight A's. You've got lots of other talents anyway. And it's so easy talking to you." He paused and gave a short, embarrassed laugh. "I'm not really used to talking about this kind of thing."

"Aww," she said, "I was just getting to like it."

They laughed and then looked at each other. For the first time they were alone together with the shared realization that something special was happening between them. They leaned toward each other at the same time.

The kiss was simple, brief and overpowering.

Christy leaned back to look into David's eyes. "Wow," she said.

"Yeah." He stroked her cheek with one finger.

"We'd better go in. We're going to be late." She reached for the door handle, feeling the need to take some deep breaths of fresh air and get some perspective on what was happening. They walked into the movie theater with their arms around each other.

Turn to page 36.

continued from p. 19

Although the sun was bright, the fall air was crisp and bracing. David sniffed with satisfaction and scanned the field where Rosemont High's cross-country team was assembling in preparation for the afternoon's practice run.

"Looking for anyone in particular, Velásquez?" Mike Rothman wanted to know.

"Just looking," David replied, bending to retie his shoe. He'd spotted Christy among a group of girls who were going through their warm-up stretches. He hoped she hadn't noticed his staring.

The coach appeared then and the group gathered briefly while he detailed the plans for upcoming practices and competitions. David was one of the three or four top runners in the league, and he was looking forward to next week's meet, which would officially mark the beginning of the cross-country season.

"Any questions?" Coach Clark wanted to know. "Okay, that's it then. Three times around the course and I'll see you all back out here this time tomorrow."

Together, the team started off at an easy pace in the direction of Garden Street Park, three blocks from the school. The course there was a pleasant

one, over packed dirt paths that wound through stands of maples and alders, now ablaze in their autumn glory. The group stayed together at first, but would soon spread out as the faster runners began to hit their stride. Gina Cruz, Rosemont's fastest girl runner, waved to Christy and Tracy as she passed.

David knew that Christy and Tracy were just a few paces behind him. Although he hadn't worked up the nerve to call Christy, he hadn't entirely given up on the idea of getting to know her better. He wondered if he could slow down casually and let them catch up.

"Is something wrong?" Mike wanted to know. "We should get moving."

David looked at his friend, wondering if he should make up some excuse and tell him to go on ahead.

"Hey, Mike!"

Saved by the voice of fate! thought David as Mike slowed his pace and Tracy and Christy came alongside. "How'd you do on the geography test?" Tracy asked.

"I don't know. I think I messed up on the map part. I can't keep the names of all those islands straight."

While Mike and Tracy talked about their exam, Christy moved closer to David. "I'm glad I took

geography last semester," she said. "So how are you?"

He smiled wholeheartedly. "I'm fine. How's it goin'?"

"Great. I can't believe this day. It's so beautiful."

"It really is."

"Well, you probably want to go on ahead. Don't let me hold you up."

"Oh, it's okay. I like to start off kind of easy anyway. Besides, you seem to be doing pretty well."

"I usually start off well enough, but then I get winded later on."

"You just need to build up your endurance. It takes practice is all."

They entered the park then, and Christy looked around appreciatively. "I could run here every day of my life, I think," she said.

"I do, practically," said David.

"Even weekends?"

"Even weekends.... Well, sometimes I go over on Sunset Road. It's a longer run—but it's real nice out there."

"I've never been running there," Christy said.

Perfect opportunity, David thought. He glanced at her and felt anxiety grip him once again. She looked so irresistible, with her shining eyes,

flushed cheeks and her hair streaming out behind her. He was mentally kicking himself when she spoke.

"So are you going there this weekend?"

"Well, uh...I could."

"How would you feel about some company?"

"Oh. Well, yeah. Sure."

"You're sure? I mean I don't want to impose or anything."

"Oh, no, that'd be great. Really." He looked at her. "I mean it."

"Okay, good. It looks like Mike's taking off."

"I guess I should catch up. See you later then."

"See ya."

As David sprinted on ahead, Christy slackened her pace and fell in next to Tracy. "I did it," she declared. "It wasn't even that hard."

"I told you so," said Tracy, punching Christy's shoulder. "So what's the plan?"

"We're going running this weekend. Out on Sunset Road."

"Sunset Road, huh? Sounds romantic."

"Shut up," said Christy with a grin.

On Saturday morning, Christy and David pedaled their bikes out of the main part of town

toward Sunset Road. There were fewer houses here, interspersed among fields and wooded areas. The morning was cool and overcast and Christy shivered despite her fleecy sweatshirt and the exertion of the bike ride. The smoke rising from the chimneys of the houses they passed made them look awfully inviting. "Brrr," she muttered.

"You cold?" asked David, turning to her.

"No, not really."

"You're sure you want to do this?"

"Of course." Oh great, she thought, now he thinks I'm a wimp.

"Anyway," he said with a smile, "a good run up this hill ought to warm you up."

Either that or kill me, Christy thought. The sloping road ahead of them wasn't exactly steep, but it rose gradually and steadily for about a mile. At the top of the grade, Christy knew, was a roadside turnout with a terrific view of the town. It was especially impressive at twilight and had led to the name "Sunset Road."

After locking their bikes to a fence at the road's edge, Christy and David started off.

"How far do you usually go?" she asked.

"About four or five miles. But we don't have to go that far," he added quickly, noticing her wide-eyed look. "It's about a mile up the hill, then there's a neat trail that cuts down toward the

river and then joins up with the road again. We can just go part way if you want."

"If you want to do the whole thing, I can wait for you," Christy offered.

"No, it's okay. Let's see how it goes. Besides, after a few times, I bet you'll be able to do it all."

They set off at an easy pace along the wide shoulder of the road. Although the slope was gentle, Christy was intensely aware of it. She concentrated on breathing deeply and evenly and casting sidelong looks at David. He said "after a few times," she thought. That must mean he's thinking we'll keep seeing each other.

For his part, David was enjoying having Christy by his side. Her humor and spunkiness and general good nature put him at ease. Her smile drove him crazy.

Just as Christy thought her legs had turned to lead and wouldn't move another inch, they reached the crest of the hill.

"You okay?" David asked, noticing her damp hair and exceptionally rosy cheeks.

"I am now," she answered, trying not to puff too hard.

"Right by those trees is where we turn off."

To get to the trail, they had to climb down a short embankment. David bounded down with easy grace then turned to help Christy. As he

reached up to take her hand, the gravel slipped beneath her feet and she plummeted forward. David caught her against his chest.

"Oh my," she said. "Excuse me." But she didn't pull away.

David felt his heart rate increase with the awareness of her warmth against him. He breathed in the scent of her hair and skin and tightened his arms for a moment. Then he released her and stepped back.

"Feel free to do that anytime," he said.

They continued along the path toward the river. They passed a field where black and white cows stood contemplating them with soft, dark eyes. The overcast sky was beginning to break up and patches of blue were appearing. Drops of moisture on the grass and among the leaves of the trees began to glisten as the sun shone through.

Christy and David ran in silence, wrapped in the beauty of the morning and the pleasure of their newly discovered feelings for each other.

Afterward, they biked to Christy's house.

"Are you sure you don't want to come in?" she asked.

"I'd like to, but I have to get ready for work. Maybe you could stop by the pizza parlor later? I'll make you a Velásquez Special."

"What's that?"

"Can't tell. Trade secret. But I will say it's hot and spicy."

Christy laughed. "I'll see if I can come by." She stood next to her bike, fidgeting with the handlebars.

"Well, okay then," David said, but he didn't move to remount his bike.

"Okay...." She looked directly at him then and caught the look of tenderness and longing in his eyes. They leaned together simultaneously, their lips barely brushing.

Christy stepped back and smiled. "Okay," she said firmly. Turning quickly, she pushed her bike up the walk toward the house.

David pedaled off, smiling. When she went into the house, Christy's little brother, Robbie, greeted her exuberantly. "Hey, Christy, were you kissing that guy?"

"None of your business, buster." Christy grabbed him and began to tickle.

"You were...I saw...," he gasped between giggles.

She let him go. "You must be seeing things, Rob," she declared. Whistling, she walked into the kitchen and poured herself a glass of milk.

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Over the weeks that followed, Christy and David took advantage of every possible opportunity to be together. They practiced together in drama class and they ran together after school. Even though David usually went ahead with the fast runners, he waited for her and walked her home afterwards. And though they didn't get a lot of time on weekends due to David's work schedule, they managed a number of trips to the library on weeknights.

David's mom was so happy to see her formerly shy son with a girlfriend that she cheerfully lent him the car. At the library, David and Christy raced through their homework and spent the remaining time enjoying each other's company. Sometimes they sat whispering in a warm, quiet corner. Other times they sat in the car, which was small and cramped but did allow them some privacy.

Neither Christy nor David had ever felt this way before. The increasing intensity of their kisses and caresses brought them both excitement and alarm. Christy was especially worried as her body's responses and her emotions seemed to threaten to spiral out of control. On several occasions when they were in each other's arms, she had wanted to pull away and talk about what was happening—or what might happen. But she

was afraid David might be offended, and besides, it did feel good.

Too good, she told herself. If I don't say something, we might even end up having sex without ever discussing it. I don't know if I'm ready for that, and if I am, shouldn't we use some kind of birth control?

What if David hasn't even thought about it? Maybe he's happy with things the way they are and doesn't want to go any further.

Christy Ann, she scolded herself, the only way to find out what he's thinking is to ask him.

Okay, okay, she thought. I will say something. Next time. Before we get all tangled up. I will. I promise.

What did Christy do?

Choice Point 2A

If you think Christy **talked** to David about her sexual feelings

turn to page 118.

Choice Point 2B

If you think Christy **didn't talk** to David about her sexual feelings

turn to page 69.

Continued from p. 25

When David got home later on that night, both his mother and brother were asleep. Danny's bedside light was on and a skateboard magazine was opened across his chest. David gently removed the magazine and turned out the light before crawling into his own bed.

He couldn't sleep though. He reviewed the events of his evening with Christy, going over every detail of their growing closeness. In his imagination he replayed their first kiss, the feeling of having Christy next to him in the movie theater, the conversation they'd shared afterwards in the kitchen at her house, their goodnight kisses. He recalled the scent of her skin and hair, the softness of her skin and the warmth in her hazel eyes when she looked at him. It was that look, with its obvious interest, affection and promise that took him into a deep peaceful sleep.

During the next couple of weeks, Christy and David took advantage of every possible opportunity to see each other. Because of David's work schedule, they couldn't have a lot of time together on the weekends, but they managed to get

together most weeknights. David's mom was so happy to see her formerly shy son with a girlfriend that she readily lent him the car most of the times he asked for it. When Danny grumbled about favoritism, she told him she'd give him the same consideration when he was a senior. "If you keep your grades up," she added. "Which reminds me, you still need to finish your homework, don't you?"

Christy, in the meantime, developed a chronic need to go to the library in the evening. Her parents, knowing that David was a top student, thought he would have a good influence on her and let her go. Fortunately for Christy, they didn't ask to see the "reports" that necessitated these nightly outings.

David and Christy did put in an appearance at the library most evenings. There, they would race through their homework—which was easy for David but might have cost Christy a few grades if David hadn't helped her through. They spent the remaining time getting to know each other and enjoying their togetherness. Sometimes they sat in a quiet corner of the library and conversed in whispers, other times they spent the evening in the car. The car, however, was not an ideal place. For one thing, as the fall nights grew colder, sitting in the car became more and more like

sitting in a walk-in refrigerator. For another, the car was small and not very comfortable. It was definitely not the place for romance, a subject that was being pursued avidly by both Christy and David.

One night as they sat in the library parking lot, Christy slipped her cold hands under David's shirt and whispered, "We've got to stop meeting like this."

Shivering, David put his arms around Christy, kissed her, and whispered, "I agree." Then he returned the favor with an equally-frozen touch to her ribcage.

She shrieked appropriately. Pushing him away, she said, "Let's go get something warm to drink. I can't take this any more."

They drove to a nearby coffee shop they'd recently discovered. Although it didn't have the atmosphere (or the hamburgers) of the local hang-out, it offered relative privacy and a decent cup of hot chocolate.

When they were settled in a quiet corner booth, Christy turned to David. "You're staring at me. Is something wrong?"

"I think I love you," he said.

Christy's mouth fell open. "Oh my...." She stared at David, then down at her cup. She shook her head slowly, then looked back up at him.

"I don't know what happened.... It...it...just sort of came out," David stammered.

"Do you want to take it back?"

"Oh no." He reached for her hand.

"For once in my life," she said, "I seem to be speechless."

"That shocking, huh?"

She smiled. "It's wonderful. I...I just don't know what to say. I wasn't...like...prepared...."

"You don't have to say anything. As long as you're not upset about it."

"Upset? Are you kidding? I just can't believe it." She wondered if she should say "I love you" back to him. It seemed appropriate but she didn't want to say the words without being sure she felt the commitment she thought should go with them. "I probably feel the same way," she said finally, "but right now it's kind of overwhelming. I've never felt like this before."

"Drink your hot chocolate." David said. "And stop worrying about it." He released her hand.

She took a sip. "I'm really happy," she said, leaning back and smiling.

"Good. I am too...only...."

"Only what? What's wrong?"

"Nothing's wrong. Don't panic. It's just that I've been feeling kind of...um...frustrated, I guess, that we don't seem to be able to get any

time alone. Not like alone in the car, but, you know, *alone* alone."

"Oh."

"So anyway I was thinking maybe you could come over to my place sometime after practice?"

"Well, maybe I could for a little while. But isn't Danny there? And what about your mom?"

"Danny's started basketball practice and Mom doesn't get home till around 5:00 or 5:30. So that would give us an hour or so."

Christy sipped her hot chocolate thoughtfully.

"So what do you think? Do you want to come over on Tuesday?"

"Well...I think so.... Maybe I need to think about it a little."

"Oh. Okay. I thought.... Oh, never mind."

"Are you upset with me?"

"I guess I'm kind of surprised 'cause I thought you were feeling the same way I was."

"I think I am, David." She stroked his arm. "But things are moving so fast. It's kind of scary."

"It's scary for me too. I've never felt like this before. But I don't want to pressure you." He kissed her fingertips. "Really."

"Okay. It's not that I don't want to come over, you know. I do. I'll let you know Tuesday at the latest, okay?"

"There's no rush. Honest. But there is some-

thing else."

She looked at him warily.

"Your birthday. It's Sunday, right?"

She smiled with relief. "Uh huh."

"So do you have anything special planned?"

"No, nothing's exactly planned. I guess we'll have kind of a family party. Prob'ly Tracy and Serena will come over for cake. That's about it. I wish you didn't have to work."

"Yeah, me too. But I think I can get off early Saturday, if you don't have plans."

"That would be fantastic. What do you want to do?"

"Leave that to me, my dear," David said, waggling his eyebrows.

For Christy's birthday David took her to Philippe's, a popular French restaurant. It was a perfect dinner, with sparkling crystal, fresh flowers, candlelight and wonderful food. The entire evening had a magical quality for Christy—especially when she opened the small box David handed her.

"It's beautiful!" She held up a tiny gold heart pendant with a glittering pale blue stone in its center.

"Happy birthday, sweet sixteen."

"That's a blue topaz, your birthstone."

"Oh David, I don't know what to say."

"Happy birthday, sweet sixteen." He kissed her slowly and deliberately.

"I love you," she said.

On Tuesday, Christy and David met after school. They stood inside the main doorway, watching the freezing rain.

"Come on, I'll warm you up," David offered.

Christy hesitated. "It's not the rain."

"What is it? I don't want you to do anything you don't want to do, you know. We don't have to do anything at all. Just come over and get something to eat. We can play some music or something."

Christy smiled. "You're very tempting."

What did Christy do?

Choice Point 3A

If you think Christy decided **to go** to David's apartment

turn to page 45.

Choice Point 3B

If you think Christy decided **not to go** to David's apartment

turn to page 62.

continued from p. 44

"Let's go," she said, taking his arm. Determinedly they started off through the icy drizzle. When they arrived, they peeled off their wet coats and took off their shoes. David turned on the heater and set Christy's things in front of it. He brought her a towel for her hair.

"I could make some hot chocolate," he offered.

"That would be great." She huddled close to the heater.

David busied himself in the kitchen and returned to stand behind Christy. He rubbed her shoulders and kissed the nape of her neck. "You smell like a wet puppy."

She giggled and turned to face him. He bent to kiss her and she reached to put her arms around his neck. She had to stand on tiptoe.

They went into the kitchen to finish making the hot chocolate. Then, mugs in hand, they wandered into the living room.

"So what do we do now?" Christy wanted to know.

"Well, I could show you my brother's paintings." He moved tentatively toward the bedroom.

"Hey, not only are they your brother's paintings, but that's his line, too. I heard him try it on

Lisa." She followed him into his and Danny's room.

"It gets 'em every time," he said with a grin.

"Wow!" She surveyed the room, the walls of which were covered with Danny's fanciful and colorful paintings. "He's really good."

"Yeah. Unfortunately it doesn't seem to run in the family."

"You've got other talents."

"Such as?" he asked.

"Well...." She put down her mug. "C'mere." After a few moments she added, "Such as you're a great kisser."

"Thanks," he said sitting on the edge of the bed in what he hoped was a casual manner.

"What you said earlier..." she began, then stopped.

"About what?"

"About the line that 'gets 'em every time.' Was that true?" She sat down next to him, equally casual.

"What do you think?"

"Jeez, I don't know. You told me you didn't have much experience, but it seems like you know what you're doing."

David laughed. "That's because I've thought about it a lot. Like I said, I've kissed a few girls, but not much more. You're the first girl who's

ever been in my room."

"What about Lisa?"

"Okay, you're the second. But you're the first for me. Besides Lisa and Danny never do anything in here anyway. She's too uptight."

"You think I'm not uptight?"

"I don't know. Are you?"

"It depends what you mean, I guess. I mean, like, I don't normally go into guys' bedrooms and sit on their beds." She started to get up.

He caught her arm. "Whoa. Hey, that's not what I meant." He held her against him and stroked her hair. She relaxed a little. "What I meant was that Lisa's kind of a tease. And you're not. Lisa's flirting would drive me crazy. I mean, she's real nice and all that—I like her a lot—but she does kind of a number on Dan. You know, like, 'Come here. No, go away. No, come here.' But Danny doesn't seem to mind too much."

"He's so easygoing. But I know what you mean about Lisa. Well, I prob'ly shouldn't be talking about her behind her back. Anyway it's not her fault. Her religion's real strict, and so's her father—my gosh! Have you met him?"

"No, but Dan's told me some stories. I think he likes Dan okay, though. He always brings Lisa home on time and he's real polite."

Christy glanced at the clock. "It's 4:30."

"So what do you want to do for the next half hour?"

"I don't know. Got any cards? We could play gin."

"I love it when you get that twinkle in your eye." He bent down to kiss her. "You still smell like a wet puppy." Removing his glasses, he scooted back on the bed, lay down, and reached for her.

They didn't talk much after that, until 5:04 when Christy suddenly pushed herself upright. "Omigosh, they'll be home any minute," she exclaimed. She jumped up and began straightening her blouse. She rummaged through her purse in search of a comb.

David watched her silently, with conflicting feelings. He'd never felt closer to anyone. If she hadn't jumped up, he thought, who knows what might have happened?

"I'd better get out of here," Christy said. "Your mom might be upset."

"No, she won't be. Anyway, then I can use the car to take you home."

"I'd rather go now. It's not raining anymore."

"Okay, whatever you say." He got up. "I'll walk you home."

"You don't have to."

"I know I don't have to. I want to. Do you

mind? If you insist on walking, I insist on going with you."

"Are you mad or something?"

"No, of course not."

"You sound mad."

"Well, I'm not. Are you ready?"

They walked silently through the darkening afternoon, accompanied by the swish of car tires on the rain-slick streets. About halfway to Christy's house, David put his arm around her shoulders and nuzzled the top of her head. "I love you," he said.

She slipped her arm around his waist. "Me too you."

At her door they kissed and David headed home, jogging. It was almost completely dark now, but he enjoyed the crisp air and the reflections of lights in the puddles. He also wanted a chance to think.

He'd never felt like this before. True, there'd been girls he'd been interested in, even girls he'd lusted after. But he'd never felt such a strong connection; he'd never felt loved. Plus, he thought, I've never had a girl in my room! The possibilities were too overwhelming to think about.

I should talk to Christy about this, he thought. She seems to enjoy it as much as I do. We should

probably talk about how far we're going to go so we can be prepared if we need to be. David hadn't talked much about sex with anyone except Danny, who wasn't exactly an expert on the subject for all his popularity among the girls.

Christy's real easy to talk to about other things, David thought. It ought to be easy enough to talk to her about this. Still, when it came right down to it, he wasn't sure if he'd be able to work up the nerve.

The next few days were busy ones. It was Thanksgiving week so Wednesday was the last day of school. Cross-country season was over, and now Christy and David had play rehearsals in the afternoons. After Wednesday's rehearsal, they walked home through the gathering darkness.

"I have to baby-sit Robbie tonight," Christy said. "Is there any chance you can come over?"

"'Fraid not. Dan and I promised Mom we'd help her shop tonight. We've got to take all the stuff for tomorrow's dinner over to my sister Teresa's house. Mom really wants you to come over there tomorrow. Do you think you can?"

"I don't know. It's going to be crazy around

our house. My grandparents are coming and some of my folks' friends. What time do you usually eat?"

"I think around 2:00, but you could come over anytime. I can pick you up."

"We don't eat till 5:00 or 6:00 so maybe I can come early for a while. Why don't you leave me your sister's number and I'll call you tomorrow."

"Okay. How about Friday?"

"Ooo, Friday! I can't wait. I'm going to take my driver's test then."

"Great. Then you can take me out on Friday night."

"It's a deal."

Christy knocked on the door of the Velásquez's apartment at 7:00 on Friday night. Irene Velásquez greeted her with a hug. "Congratulations!" she said. "How was the test?"

Christy laughed. "Well, aside from the fact that I almost blew it 'cause I don't know the difference between left and right, it was fine."

David came out smiling. "What happened? Did you turn the wrong way or something?"

"I tried to. I was so nervous I couldn't think straight. But the woman was real nice. She made

me pull over and calm down. Then everything was cool."

"I don't know," said David, "if it's safe to go out with you or not."

Christy tossed her head. "Well, you don't have to if you don't want to."

David smiled at his mom. "See what I have to put up with?"

"Poor you," she replied.

"Let's go. Bye, Mom."

"Bye," said Christy. "I won't keep him out too late. Don't worry."

Once in the car, Christy flung her arms around David and kissed him passionately. "I'm so happy to see you! Yesterday I could hardly get in three words to you with all your family around."

"Yeah, it was a little crowded. They loved you though. Teresa and Eddie want me to bring you over again soon."

"They're so nice. And the baby's adorable. And so are you!" She kissed him again.

David took off his glasses and wiped them with a tissue. "Now look what you've done. You got me all fogged up."

"Aww, poor baby. Well, we'd better get to the movie, I guess." She started the car and pulled away from the curb.

They sat in the back of the movie theater, snug

in the flickering darkness, sharing popcorn and kisses. Afterwards they drove around town looking for places their friends might be so Christy could impress them with her newly acquired license. They found some friends to have pizza with, then they drove slowly toward David's apartment. Neither of them wanted the evening to come to an end.

When the car was parked, David turned to Christy. "There's something I've been wanting to say," he began.

Christy looked at him with surprise. "Is it something bad?"

"Oh no, nothing like that." Okay, he told himself, you're alone, you're not in the middle of a heavy make-out scene or anything. It's the perfect time to talk to her about sex. "I...uh...."

This is not happening, he thought. It's just too embarrassing.

"David, what?"

What did David do?

Choice Point 4A

If you think David decided **to talk** to Christy about sex

turn to page 55.

Choice Point 4B

If you think David decided **not to talk** to Christy about sex at this time

turn to page 65.

?0(62

continued from p. 54

"It's just that I never felt this way before," he began. He ran his fingers over the back of her hand as he spoke. "When we're together, it's...I can't exactly explain it...it's like...so powerful...."

Christy nodded, feeling a warm flush rise to her skin.

"So I think we should talk about what we're going to do," he continued.

"Do?"

"I mean when we're together, we get so close.... You know what I mean, don't you?"

"I think so," she whispered.

They looked into each other's eyes for a long time. Then David said, "You know I want to make love with you."

She nodded.

"But only if you really want to. Only if we're, you know, prepared."

"I've been thinking about it, too," she said. "Maybe I should get on the pill."

"Well, I don't want to push you into anything. I could...uh...get something too."

Christy smiled. "I know you could. I guess I need to think about it. It's scary to think about just walking into the family planning clinic. What

if I saw somebody from school?"

"Could you go to your family doctor?"

"That would be worse. She'd probably want to talk to my mom."

"How would your mom feel about all this?"

"She'd probably be upset. I don't really want to talk to her about it—at least not just yet."

David leaned back and sighed. "It's pretty complicated, isn't it? For something that should be so simple."

Christy nodded in agreement. "I'd better go in." She reached over to pull him towards her. "I love you so much."

Their kiss was long and deep and sweet. "I love you," he said.

Over the weekend Christy talked with Tracy about her situation.

"Are you sure you want to do this?" Tracy asked. "Look what happened to me."

"I think this is different, Tracy. I think David really loves me. He's not like Vincent, you've got to admit that."

"Oh yeah, I know he's different in some ways, but he's the same in some ways too. Like he's a guy and he's going to be paying more attention

to...uh...his physical urges...than to your feelings."

"Not everyone's like Vince. I think most guys care. And besides, I have 'physical urges' too, you know."

"In that case you better get some protection. You should go to the clinic."

"But what if I see someone I know? I'd die."

"Would you rather be embarrassed or pregnant?"

"I'd rather be neither one. Anyway you didn't get pregnant. You told me you didn't use anything."

"I must have a guardian angel then. 'Cause I was real stupid and ol' Vincent just didn't care."

"Maybe you were too young to get pregnant. I heard you can't get pregnant the first time you have sex."

"That's wrong, Christy. If you're old enough to have a period, you're old enough to get pregnant. In fact, someone could even get pregnant before they started having periods. Were you asleep in health class or what?"

"Well, it's just that lots of people seem to do it without getting pregnant."

"You don't know that. Maybe not everyone's doing it. Maybe they get abortions. Besides people *do* get pregnant. Look at Shawna."

"If you're old enough to have a period, you're old enough to get pregnant."

"Yeah. It's really too bad about her. But that Duane—he's such a creep. And anyway, her baby's really cute."

"She's cute, I admit, but get real, Christy! Can you see yourself toting a baby around? Can you see David?"

"Yeah. I know you're right. It would totally screw up our lives. And David has so much ahead of him."

"What about you? What about your future?"

"I never thought about it much."

"Well, think about it, then. There's so much you could do."

"Me? What could I do? I don't have any real talents. Not like you and Serena anyway."

"I can't believe you're saying that. You're funny, smart, a good actress. You know how to do bookkeeping, you're a great carpenter, you're good with kids.... Just 'cause your grades aren't as good doesn't mean you can't be successful. Besides you could get better grades if you studied once in a while."

"I guess I have a lot to think about," Christy said.

"I hope you think real carefully."

"Thanks for being my friend, Trace."

"It's tough," Tracy said, "but someone has to do it."

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The following Tuesday afternoon, Christy and David once again found themselves alone in his apartment. Christy sat down in the living room and fidgeted nervously with a magazine. David sat next to her and put his arm around her.

"I don't want to pressure you," he said. "Anything you want is okay."

"The thing is...I know if we go in your room I won't want to stop. And I'm scared."

"It's okay." He stroked her hair. "Anyway, I...uh...I did buy something. Or if you want, we could just...uh...do other stuff. Like we have before."

"Oh, I just don't know. I love you so much. But I'd die if I got pregnant. Maybe I'm just not ready for this. Or maybe I'd feel better if I got on the pill."

"Then we can wait till you go to the clinic," he suggested. "Don't forget I love you."

Christy felt pulled in two directions at once. Partly she wanted, more than anything, to go into the bedroom with David right then. Her rational side, however, wanted to proceed with caution. That part of her said, "Go to the clinic. Then decide."

What did Christy do?

Choice Point 5A

If you think Christy decided **to go into the bedroom** with David

turn to page 109.

Choice Point 5B

If you think Christy decided **to go to the clinic** before she and David went any further

turn to page 116.

continued from p. 44

Christy put her hand against David's chest and looked up at him earnestly. "I do want to. I really do, but I'm kind of nervous, I guess. I keep thinking what if my mom found out. Or what if...."

"What if what? It sounds like you don't trust me."

"It's more like I don't trust *us*. I mean when we're together, it's like...I don't know...a nuclear reaction or something. I guess I just need a little time."

"Okay," David said quickly. "You can have time. I guess you'll let me know when you're brave enough to be alone with an ogre like me."

"David, it's not you, really."

"If you say so," he said. "Well, catch you later, I guess." He turned and headed down the school steps, into the drizzling rain.

Christy felt tears sting her eyes. She thought about running after him. What's the matter with me anyway? she wondered. Why can't I make up my mind?

Twenty minutes later, soaked and thoroughly miserable, Christy arrived home. Her mother was horrified. "Look at you! You'd better change right now. I'll make you some hot chocolate."

In a few minutes, Christy came into the kitchen

dressed in fleecy sweatpants and shirt and drying her hair with a towel.

"That's better," her mom said. "Didn't you even have your umbrella?"

"It wasn't raining this morning." Christy sat down at the table as her mother set a large cup of steaming chocolate in front of her.

"You seem a little blue, honey. Is something wrong?"

Under her mother's scrutiny, Christy felt her reserve beginning to break down. She looked away so her mother wouldn't see the tears. How can I talk about this with her? she thought. She'd flip out if she knew what David and I were feeling.

"Did something happen at school? I wish you'd talk to me, Christy. Maybe I can help."

I wish I could talk to you, too, Christy thought. I need to talk to someone. I have all these feelings.... Maybe she'd understand. Maybe....

What did Christy do?

Choice Point 6A

If you think Christy decided **not to talk** to her mom about her relationship with David

turn to page 72.

Choice Point 6B

If you think Christy decided **to try to talk** to her mom

turn to page 96.

continued from p. 54

"I...uh...just wanted to tell you how special you are. I've never felt like this before," David said.

Christy smiled. "I thought you were going to say something like you thought we shouldn't see each other so much or something. You looked so serious. Anyway," she went on, "I've never felt like this either."

"Not even with what's-his-name, your summer love?"

"You mean Stephen? No. It wasn't anything like this. Besides we both knew we wouldn't see each other once vacation was over. He lives a couple hundred miles away."

"But you liked him a lot."

"Well, yeah. But...you're not jealous, by any chance?"

"No...well, maybe."

"How can you be jealous of something that happened before you even knew me?"

"I don't know, but I don't like to think about it."

"Don't, then," said Christy. "Think about us. Think about now." She leaned toward him.

"Tell me," David asked after a while, "did you do this with Steve?"

Christy closed her teeth over the tender skin on his neck.

"Ow!"

"I don't want to hear one more word about Steve," she warned. He rubbed his neck. "Okay. Sorry. Where were we?"

"You were...um...here...and I was...here.... Man, this car is uncomfortable!"

"I wish we were in my room again."

"Mmm. That was nice."

"Maybe next week?" he asked hopefully.

"We'll see. Mr. Peña said we might have a rehearsal on Tuesday."

"I don't mean to be a party pooper, but do you know what time it is?"

"Uh uh." She turned on the dashboard lights and peered at the car clock. "Omigosh! My mom turns into a witch at midnight. I'd better get out of here."

"I'll call you." He kissed her one last time. "Don't forget to button your blouse."

"Very funny." She gunned the engine as he jumped out and ran for the apartment.

She drove home smiling.

The subject of going to David's didn't come

up the next week. There was an extra play rehearsal on Tuesday and Christy had to help her mother with some paperwork—it was billing time for the family's business—on Thursday.

At least we can go out tomorrow night, Christy thought as she licked another stamp. Her mom looked over at her. "By the way, I forgot to mention it earlier, but I'd like you to watch Robbie for us tomorrow night. Joan and Bill have asked us to go to a movie with them."

Christy looked up in distress. "Oh, Mom. That's my only chance to go out with David. You know he has to work Saturday and Sunday."

"I know, dear, but you do manage to see quite a bit of him anyway. I don't ask you this very often."

"You ask all the time," Christy wailed. "I feel like a slave around here sometimes."

"Christy Ann, that's an exaggeration and you know it."

They worked for a while in an uneasy silence, then Christy spoke. "Okay. I'm sorry. I admit it was an exaggeration. Can I at least have a friend over?"

"Of course you can have a friend over."

"Can I have David over?"

"Oh. Well, I don't know about that."

"C'mon, Mom, please. You know you can trust

us."

"I'll talk to Preston about it. But don't count on anything, all right?"

Christy nodded. She smiled to herself, thinking that the battle was almost won. Her stepdad didn't like to disappoint Christy, and besides, she knew he liked David a lot.

Go to the next page.

continued from p. 35 or 68

"One more ride," David told Robbie, "then it's lights-out time, okay?"

"Two more."

"One more. Or do you want to go to bed right now?"

"Okay, one."

"Climb on."

David raced around the house jumping over furniture and pretending to crash into walls while Robbie shrieked with delight.

"This is certainly going to calm him down," Christy observed.

"It'll wear him out," David panted. "He'll sleep better."

"You're the one who's getting worn out."

Eventually a wiggling, protesting Robbie was put into bed, and eventually he went to sleep, in spite of himself.

Christy made popcorn and she and David settled down in front of the TV. It wasn't long before they were stretched out on the rug with their arms and legs wrapped around each other and their hearts beating furiously.

It's a good thing I bought condoms, David thought, at the same time wondering if he'd have the nerve to put one on. "What if Robbie comes

out?" he asked. "Why don't we go into your room?"

Leaving the TV flickering to a nonexistent audience, they made their way down the hall and into Christy's bedroom. Without stopping to turn on a light, they tumbled onto the bed.

"At least take your shoes off," Christy said as she pushed her stuffed rabbits and teddy bears onto the floor.

"Can we take off more than that? I want to feel you against me."

"Oh, David, I want to, I really want to, I'm just not sure." Christy felt deliriously happy and terrified at the same time. Oh no, she thought, is this it? Am I ready? Should I say something? Events seemed to be spinning out of her control. Maybe we should stop and talk, she thought. Maybe this isn't the best thing.

David was leaning toward her. In the dim light that came in through the window she could barely make out his features. But she could see the desire that burned in his eyes.

What did Christy do?

Choice Point 7A

If you think Christy decided **to stop and talk** to David about her conflicting feelings

turn to page 89.

Choice Point 7B

If you think Christy decided **to continue making out** with David

turn to page 87.

continued from p. 64

Christy took a deep breath, wiped at her eyes, and picked up her cup. She looked at her mother. "It was just one of those days, I guess." She took a swallow of hot chocolate, feeling a measure of comfort from its warmth.

She glanced at her mother and managed a small smile. Mrs. Montgomery didn't look convinced.

"I'm okay, really."

Robbie burst into the kitchen. "Hey, where's mine?" he demanded.

His mother looked at him severely.

"I'll make you some," she said, "if you say 'please.'"

"Please."

"Hey, Rob, how was your day?" Christy asked.

Robbie clambered up on the chair next to Christy's and began to recount the day's adventures at the daycare center. When they'd finished their drinks, she took him into the living room and read to him for a while.

She tried doing some homework but didn't have much success concentrating. Maybe I should've gone, she told herself. Now he's mad at me and I'm miserable. I want to be with him more than anything. She went into her room and listened to sad music.

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She went into her room and listened to sad music.

74

After dinner Christy washed the dishes while her mom and stepdad put Robbie to bed. The telephone rang and she wiped her hands on her sweatshirt as she went to answer it.

"Hi, it's me."

"David!"

"Are you surprised?"

"Yeah. I guess."

"I was a jerk this afternoon. I'm really sorry about how I acted."

"Oh. It's okay. I've been thinking I should've gone with you."

"No, you were right to go with your feelings. I was just reacting 'cause my expectations got let down. I wanted to call you earlier, but I couldn't get any privacy to use the phone."

"Well, you're calling now anyway. It's so good to hear your voice."

"It's great to hear yours."

They talked a while longer and then said their goodbyes. "I love you," said Christy, just as her mother walked into the kitchen. Mrs. Montgomery raised her eyebrows but didn't say anything.

The following Friday Christy passed her driver's license examination. To celebrate she

took David out for dinner and a movie. Afterwards they parked the car in front of David's apartment.

David took off his glasses and set them carefully on the dashboard. They kissed, softly and tentatively at first, then with increasing urgency.

After a while, Christy broke free.

"What's the matter" David asked.

"I don't know. I just think we'd better stop." She shook her head and shivered, feeling dazed. I've never felt so close to anyone, she thought. Close emotionally *and* physically. So close I don't want to stop.

"Are you okay?" David asked with concern.

"I guess I'm just tired," she said. "Anyway it's late. It's almost midnight."

"I guess I'd better let you go then."

She nodded. "You know how my folks are. They'll kill me if I'm more than about five minutes late."

"I'll call you tomorrow. I love you."

"I love you. G'night."

Christy lay in bed going over the details of her evening with David. Thinking about him filled her with warmth and a tingling excitement all

over again. But how do I know when to stop? she wondered. Or if we should stop? I wonder what it feels like to make love....

Go to the next page.

continued from p. 76

In the following weeks, Christy waited for David to once again bring up the idea of going to his apartment after school. When he didn't mention it, she began to worry that he was losing interest in her.

David continued to be attentive in drama class and he always spent some time with her at cross-country practice, but she felt that a distance was growing between them. They went out a few times—to the movies or to the roller rink—but even then Christy thought she sensed that he was holding back. It wasn't like that night in the car when she'd felt ready for anything.

Jogging through the fallen leaves in Garden Street Park one afternoon, Christy and Tracy watched as David, Mike and the other fast runners disappeared around a bend in the park.

Christy sighed, "I just don't know what to do."

"What's up?" Tracy asked. "Did you two have a fight?"

"Oh no, nothing like that. I just don't know what he's feeling these days. He seems kind of distant."

"Have you tried asking him?"

"He just says everything's fine. But I don't think he means it."

"What do you think is wrong?"

"Hmph," replied Christy. "Three guesses."

"What? You mean it's about sex?"

"A few weeks ago he wanted me to go over to his house and I wouldn't. He said it was okay and I thought so too, but.... I don't know—it just gets kind of frustrating, you know?"

"Frustrating for you or for him?"

"Both of us, I guess."

"But you haven't talked about it."

"No. I don't know what to say exactly. I think maybe we should just go ahead and get it over with."

"Oh, that's a great idea," Tracy said with heavy sarcasm. "Just like I did with Vincent."

"Not just like. I really do love David."

"Well, I thought I really loved Vince. And he said he loved me. But we never talked about our feelings. I think you're a fool if you have sex with someone just as a way of holding on to him. You have to have a caring relationship—that's so much more important."

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The following Friday, Rosemont High's cross-country team had a meet across town. Returning on the bus, they were in a jubilant mood; they'd

scored high in both the boys' and girls' divisions.

"Way to go, Velásquez," David's teammates chorused, slapping him on the back. David smiled and then winced as he applied an ice pack to his knee. He leaned toward Christy, who was seated in front of him.

"I hear you did well today, too."

"My best time yet," she said proudly. "And Gina won the girl's race!"

"That's great. Listen, are we still on for tonight?"

"Sure, but don't you need to rest your knee? Maybe you should stay home."

David lowered his voice. "Do you want to come over? My mom's got a meeting."

Something in his voice made Christy's cheeks flush. "Okay," she said. "What time?"

When Christy arrived at David's, Danny was watching TV in the living room. "How's it goin'?" he asked, his eyes barely leaving the screen.

David seemed a little nervous. "You want to come into my room? It's kind of noisy out here."

Christy nodded, feeling a wave of anxiety sweep over her and settle in her stomach. She

followed him into the room and sat gingerly on the edge of his bed. David sat down beside her.

"How's your knee?" she asked.

"A lot better."

There was a long silence.

"So," she said. "Here we are."

David nodded and looked at her seriously, but he still didn't say anything.

I guess I could ask him how he's feeling, Christy thought, remembering Tracy's advice. But what if he says something I don't want to hear?

David solved her dilemma. "Are you nervous?" he asked.

She nodded.

"Me too."

"You are? You don't seem like it."

"'Cause I'm not shaking all over, you mean? I'm just shaking on the inside, I guess."

Christy's outward reserve vanished in a flood of tears. "I'm so scared," she sobbed. "I don't know what to do. I love you so much."

David hugged her against his chest. "You don't know what a relief it is to hear you say that. You've been so distant lately."

"*I've* been distant? I thought *you'd* been distant!"

"Well, it seemed like you didn't want to be,

you know, close."

"I was confused, David. I've never felt like this." She sniffed and he reached for a tissue to give her. She blew her nose and looked up at him.

He pushed a strand of damp hair back from her cheek. "I've never felt like this either."

"I can't believe we haven't talked about this before," she said. "I was all ready to go to bed with you as a way to get you interested in me again."

"And now?" He looked at her intently.

"Kiss me," she said. "Then I'll tell you."

He kissed her slowly and she felt a warmth rise from her toes that filled her whole body. "Now I want to go to bed with you because I love you. And you love me."

David reached for her. "I do love you," he said. "That's a fact."

"What about your knee?" she asked, hesitating.

"I can manage."

"What about Danny?"

"Don't worry. He won't come in. We have an agreement."

"What about the light? Could we turn it off?"

He reached up and flipped the switch. "There. Now will you shut up and come here?"

She laughed and leaned over to kiss him. For a while there was only silence and an occasional sigh.

"One more thing."

"Now what?" he muttered. "This better be important."

"It's important. Do you...uh...are you...well, you know. Do you have anything?"

"What do you mean 'anything'? Like a disease?"

"No, silly. Like, you know, a condom."

"Of course I do. What kind of guy do you think I am?"

"I think you're a wonderful guy. Now, where were we?"

Christy and David made love occasionally during the months that followed although it was difficult for them to find the time to be alone. David continued to buy condoms and Christy bought contraceptive foam to use for extra protection. Then one day she came home from school to find her mother waiting for her. Mrs. Montgomery's face was pale and her voice was low and controlled.

"Is there anything you've been meaning to tell

me?" she asked.

Christy shook her head.

"What do you have to say about this?" Her mother held out a small aerosol container.

"Where'd you get that?"

"Answer my question, Christy Ann. Who does this contraceptive foam belong to?"

"You had no right to go through my things."

"From the look of it, I should've gone through your things a long time ago."

"It's not your business."

"You're my business," cried her mother, her voice breaking. "How could you do this to me?"

"Do what to you? You did it to yourself. What were you doing looking through my drawers?"

Christy's mother sighed. She slumped into a chair. "I was putting away the laundry. I know I usually have you do it, but I thought I'd help you out this time. So when I opened your sock drawer I noticed some socks with holes in them. I thought they should either be mended or thrown away so I was going through them to sort them out. This was at the bottom of the drawer." She set the can on the table. "As you know." She looked up at her daughter with damp eyes. "Sit down, Chris. I'm not going to yell at you anymore."

Christy sat down carefully. She felt her initial anger beginning to subside now that she knew

her mother hadn't intentionally been searching her room.

"I just wish I could understand. Why didn't you tell me?"

"Mom, after the reaction you just had, you still want to know why I didn't tell you?"

"It really is yours, then? I was hoping maybe it belonged to a friend or something...."

"It's mine, Mom." Christy took a deep breath. Here goes nothing, she thought. "David and I have been having sex for a couple of months."

"Oh, Christy," her mother said. "You're so young."

"Mother! I'm not that young. A lot of kids my age—and younger—are having sex these days, believe me."

"Oh, I believe you. I just didn't think you'd be one of them. Not yet. I thought you'd come to me—or somehow I'd know when you were thinking about it."

"Did you tell your mom?"

Mrs. Montgomery smiled faintly. "No, but my mom and I weren't as close as you and I are—as I thought we were. Besides I was older. And I thought I was in love."

"Well, I *know* I'm in love, Mom. And David's in love with me. And...and I wanted to tell you, but I was afraid you'd freak out."

"I guess I made your fears come true." Christy's mom sighed heavily. "I guess you still seem like a baby to me."

"I'm not though, Mom. And David's not. It won't be long until he goes away to college. I...we have so little time to be together. We want to make the most of it."

Christy's mom looked at her and reached for her hand. She took a deep breath. "Listen," she said, "I have to be honest with you. I think there's too much pressure on teenagers to have sex. You have so many other things to deal with. Not just school and social activities, but new emotions and changing feelings."

Christy nodded. "That's for sure."

"So it worries me that you're getting involved in something I don't think you're ready for."

"I feel like we are, Mom. David and I have talked about this a lot. And we are being careful."

"I know. I'm glad about that."

"I'm sorry I didn't say anything before. I didn't think you'd understand."

"Well," said Mrs. Montgomery, "I still think you're too young. That's my true feeling. But I also think I understand your feelings, so I'll try to respect them." She reached out and hugged her daughter.

"Thanks, Mom."

"Thank *you,* Christy. For being such a great kid. I'm really proud of you."

THE END

continued from p. 71

Feeling almost as though she was in a trance, Christy reached out and slowly unbuttoned David's shirt. She ran her hands over his smooth, hot skin.

As they helped each other with various hooks, buttons, snaps and zippers, David's mind was racing ahead. Part of his mind was saying "Condom, condom, condom." But part of his mind seemed incapable of thinking at all. "You're so beautiful," he breathed.

"You can't even see. It's too dark."

"I can see enough. Anyway, you feel beautiful."

"So do you."

Now what? he thought, as it was obviously getting close to the appropriate time for putting on the condom. We'll have to turn a light on. I know I'll never get the thing on in the dark.

"David?"

"Yes?"

"Is anything wrong?"

"No.... I was just thinking...."

"What?"

Well, thought David, will I or won't I? I've got to decide right now.

What did David do?

Choice Point 8A
If you think David decided
to use a condom
turn to page 102.

Choice Point 8B
If you think David decided
not to use a condom
turn to page 130.

continued from p. 71

"David," Christy whispered.

"Yes?"

"I'm scared."

"I'll be careful."

"No, it's not that. It's...I...I feel like things are going too fast."

"This is a great time to tell me."

"I know. I'm sorry. It feels so good with you, I just got carried away."

David pulled back slightly and raised himself on one elbow. He looked down at Christy, barely able to make out her features in the dim light. "I'm kind of scared too, babe, but I really love you. We're in this together, you know."

"I know. I love you too. But I feel like it's such a big step. I'm not sure if I'm ready for the responsibility."

David didn't answer right away and Christy felt something close to panic beginning to rise in her. What if I've lost him? she asked herself. Maybe it's not fair for me to ask him to wait. Maybe I should go ahead and do it anyway.

David stroked her hair. He touched her cheek gently. "Hey," he asked softly, "is that a tear?"

Christy sniffed a little in reply.

"I meant it when I said we're in this together."

"I feel like things are going too fast."

Christy pushed her face against his chest. "I'm so afraid of losing you."

"Losing me? Are you crazy? I'm not going anywhere. Don't you listen to me? If you want to wait, we'll wait. It's okay. It's not my first choice, but it's okay."

"You're sure?"

"I'm sure. I love you, you idiot. Don't you believe me?"

"I believe you. Sometimes I can't believe how lucky I am."

The following weeks were filled with holiday preparations. It was Christy's favorite time of year and she flung herself into the spirit of things with even more than her customary enthusiasm.

On Saturday she went to Tracy's house to help her make cookies. Tracy's mother and sister were shopping, and her brother was at a friend's so the girls had the house to themselves. They chatted about school, the progress of play rehearsals, their friends, and of course their love lives. Or, in Tracy's case, lack of love life.

"I just don't understand you," Christy said, sampling a stray bit of cookie dough. "I mean, Tom's so cute. Why won't you even give him a

chance?"

"I know he's cute, but we've been through this a zillion times. I don't want to get involved."

"I think you just don't want to have sex."

"Well, it's practically the same thing. All the guys expect it after you've been going out for a while."

"Not all the guys, Tracy. Just 'cause you had a bad experience you shouldn't assume it's always going to be like that."

"Lots of other people have had bad experiences. Look at Shawna."

"You're just looking at the negative examples. Besides if Shawna had used birth control, she wouldn't have gotten pregnant."

"Maybe not, but Duane still would've dumped her eventually."

"Not all guys are like Vincent and Duane, Trace. You know that. What about James, for instance? He and Serena have been together for a year and he's not pressuring her at all."

"Well, James and Serena are super responsible. They always have been. They're hard-working...dedicated...really concerned about their future."

"Serena told me they had some real hassles about sex and they finally decided that if they wanted to plan for the future and keep their rela-

tionship, they'd have to wait."

"They really love each other."

"Yeah."

"It looks like you and David are pretty close, too."

"Mmm, it kind of looks that way."

"So what about you two? You haven't made love, have you? You promised you'd tell me if you did."

Christy laughed and felt herself blushing. "Well, we haven't gone all the way. I know David would like to, but he doesn't bug me about it. When I feel ready, then.... Anyway, there's other stuff that...uh...you know, feels good."

"Other stuff like 'second base, third base'?"

"Yeah, lots of things."

"But doesn't it still make you want to...uh...just go ahead and do it? I mean if you get so turned on?"

"You just tell yourself that's not an option. At least not now. David doesn't seem to mind too much.... Are those ready to go into the oven now?"

When the cookies were in the oven, Christy and Tracy decided to mix up a batch of brownies. They had to wait for the cookies to finish baking so they could put the brownies in, so they listened to music and looked at magazines.

Later on, when the cookies and brownies were finally baked and cooling, there was a knock at the door. Tracy went to get it.

"Hey Christy, look who's here!"

"Surprise!"

"David!" Christy jumped up and ran for a hug. "How come you're not at work?"

"I made a deal with the boss. I'm going to work some extra weekdays during vacation in exchange for Saturdays off. I was going to surprise you at your house, but your mom said you were here."

"Yeah, my dad dropped me off."

"Hey," Tracy broke in. "Why don't you sit down? Relax. Have a brownie."

"Thanks. It smells great in here. So what else have you two been doing?"

"Oh, we've been discussing global politics, environmental issues, stuff like that."

"Right."

After an hour of visiting and laughing, David and Christy left, taking a tin of cookies for each of their families and a special brownie for Robbie.

As they drove through the dusk, brightly colored Christmas lights began to sparkle around them. Christy felt immersed in beauty and love.

"I'm so happy," she said. "This is my best

Christmas ever."

David smiled and reached over to squeeze her hand. When they stopped at a traffic light, he leaned over and kissed her. "Mine too," he said.

THE END

continued from p. 64

"Yeah, something happened at school." Christy said, feeling her voice break. "David and I had a...sort of a fight, I guess."

"Do you feel like telling me about it?" asked her mom. She moved tentatively toward the table where Christy sat.

Christy gulped. "I don't know. I don't know how to talk about it."

Elaine Montgomery sat down and looked at her daughter with concern. "I know it's not easy to talk about some things, honey, but I want to help you if I can. It hurts me to see you so unhappy. Things seemed to be so good between you and David. What happened?"

"Things were good with us." She picked up a paper napkin and blew her nose. "Really good. That's sort of the problem. We really like each other, and when we're together...well...I think I really love him, Mom." She twisted the napkin in her hands.

"Is he pressuring you about sex?"

Christy looked up, startled. She felt herself blushing and looked back down again. "Um, no, not really. It's more like the pressure's coming from both of us. When we're together, it's like...I don't know, I can't explain it exactly...."

"I think I know what you mean." She sighed. "Oh, Christy, this is what every mother worries about."

"I didn't want to worry you, Mom. You asked."

"I know. And I'm glad you talked to me. It means a lot that you're willing to share your feelings with me." She thought for a few moments, then asked hesitantly, "You haven't...uh...gone all the way, have you?"

Christy shook her head. At least this is hard for her to talk about, too, she thought.

Mrs. Montgomery seemed to relax.

Then Christy added in a small voice, "But I'm thinking about it." Why did I say that? she asked herself. Just to test Mom's reactions?

Contrary to Christy's expectations, her mother didn't jump up and down, yell or cry. She looked her daughter straight in the eye and said evenly, "I think you're too young, Christy Ann. Believe me, I know how you feel but if you start having sex now, I can just about guarantee you'll regret it later."

"You don't know that."

"No, but I know you and I know more about life than you do."

"You don't know everything about me. And you don't know David."

"Not as well as I'd like to. But he's always

struck us as a very responsible young man."

"He *is* responsible. He also loves me."

"I'm sure he does. Listen, Christy, let's not turn this into an argument. You're clearly upset by your emotions and feelings about this relationship. I'd like to help you sort things out if I can."

"I don't want to argue either, Mom. But when I tell you what my feelings are, you start telling me what I can or can't do. That just makes me more confused."

Christy's mom looked at her thoughtfully. "I see your point. I wish you could see mine, but you probably won't until you're 35 years old." She smiled ruefully and reached out to pat Christy's arm. "Well, regardless of my feelings, I want you to know I'm here for you. I guess the worst thing would be if you ended up like your friend...what's her name? Shawna?"

Christy nodded.

"I know you know the basic facts. I always felt you should know where babies come from and that sort of thing. What you may not know is how easy it is to get pregnant. Promise me you won't take chances, Christy. I'll go with you to the family planning clinic if you don't want to go by yourself. When it comes down to it, I'd rather know you're protected than have to worry about

"What you may not know is how easy it is to get pregnant."

what you're doing every time you're out of my sight."

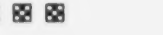
"Thanks," Christy said. "I will be careful, I promise. *If* I decide to have sex."

"Think about what I said, okay?"

Christy nodded. She finished the now cold chocolate and stood up.

Her mother stood up, too, and hugged her daughter. "Oh Christy, my great big baby, I sure love you."

"I love you, too, Mom."



After dinner that night, as Christy was washing the dishes and her folks were putting Robbie to bed, the telephone rang. Christy wiped her hands on her sweatshirt as she went to answer it.

"Hi, it's me."

"David!"

"Are you surprised?"

"Yeah, I guess."

"I was a jerk this afternoon. I'm really sorry about how I acted."

"It's okay. I was kind of sorry I didn't go. I really felt torn."

"Well, I don't want to pressure you into anything."

"I know. I guess we need to talk about it some more. It's really good to hear your voice."

They talked a little more and then said goodbye. "I love you," Christy said, just as her mother walked in. Mrs. Montgomery raised an eyebrow but didn't say anything.

Turn to page 117.

continued from p. 88

After a few minutes David said, "I'm going to have to turn on the light for a second."

"Why?"

"You don't want to get pregnant, do you?"

"Oh."

"Don't laugh, okay?"

"Okay. Let me get under the covers first."

David fumbled to get the condom on. I should've practiced this at home, he thought. Christy nervously hummed a little tune. She couldn't bring herself to look directly at him.

David turned toward her with a glint of triumph in his eyes. "I think I got the sucker on all right."

Christy burst into giggles.

"Hey, you promised not to laugh."

"Turn the light off and get over here, silly." She reached toward him. His arms went around her, his mouth covered hers, and she didn't laugh any more. A little later, though, she smiled into the darkness.

Late on a crisp November afternoon, Christy and David walked home after cross-country practice.

"I can't believe the season's almost over," Christy said, "I don't know where the time's gone."

"I know," said David. "Maybe it's because we've been so busy."

Christy chuckled. They had indeed been busy—with school, play rehearsals, David's job, Christy's office work and babysitting—not to mention cross-country training practically every day and meets on weekends. It seemed like they barely had time for each other.

"In a way I'll be glad," she said. "More time to play."

He smiled, squeezed her shoulders, and kissed the top of her head. "Sounds good to me."

"Are you worried about the meet tomorrow?" she asked.

"Not really. I hope my knee behaves though."

"Is it bothering you again? You really should be keeping it iced whenever you can."

"Thanks, doc. So how do you feel about tomorrow?"

"I'm not too nervous anymore. I have more confidence than I used to."

"You've come a long way this season."

"It's 'cause I've had to chase you all over the place."

"No, seriously. I think you should go out for

track in the spring."

"You really think so? I started cross-country because Tracy was doing it and she said it would help me get in better shape. But I must admit I like the way running makes me feel."

"I like the way you make me feel," David said.

Christy smiled and slipped her arm around David's waist. "Brrr, my hands are cold," she said with a shiver.

"Here," he offered, "you can put this one in my pocket anyway."

Pushing her hand deep into his jacket pocket, Christy touched a small, smooth packet.

"Hmm, what could this be, " she said, removing it and holding it out.

"Hey, give it back," said David, making a grab for the condom package. "Someone might see."

"Well, then they'll know you're a good scout," she said. "Always prepared."

"Ha, ha. Prepared *and* responsible, my dear. Let's give credit where credit is due."

"Oh, I do give you credit," she said. "I'm really glad you're so responsible."

There was a pronounced chill in the air and a light drizzle was falling as the boys' teams of

Rosemont and King High Schools set out for their final run of the season. The runners divided into groups early on, with David, Mike, and the other fast runners out in front. David ran easily at the beginning, knowing he wouldn't have to push it until they neared the end of the race. Except for an occasional twinge in his knee, he felt good.

"What're you smiling about?"

David gave Mike a glance and shrug. It bugged him if someone tried to talk to him during a race. Anyway, he thought, it's none of his business. I've got a lot to smile about though, I guess. He was doing well in school, his college applications were finished and sent off, he had a little money saved up, and he was in love with a great girl. Plus, he thought, with just a little luck, I'm going to win this race and break the league record.

As the front runners began their final mile, the drizzle increased to a light, bone-chilling shower. The course became slippery in spots and demanded total concentration. As he pulled ahead of Mike and the rest of Rosemont's runners, David was painfully aware of the stabbing sensation in his knee. He was no longer smiling, as his chance to break the league record began to fade. Just concentrate on beating these guys, he thought, matching his pace to the two runners from King

who shared the lead with him.

In the final stretch, one of King's runners began to fall slightly behind as David and his main rival continued neck and neck. They were running flat out now, breathing hard, neither willing to give up an inch to the other.

Come on! David urged himself. Just a little bit more. Just pour it on a little bit more.

A pain shot through his leg and he faltered. It was an effort to even keep upright and moving as he watched the King runner streak ahead of him to claim first place. David limped across the finish line in second place and was immediately surrounded by congratulations and concern.

"Let's get a look at that knee," the coach ordered.

David winced as he was poked and prodded. Then someone brought an ice pack and put a blanket over his shoulders. At least it's over, he thought. At least I can rest now. He was disappointed not to have taken first place but thankful that his knee had held up until the end.

As they finished the course, David's teammates came over to congratulate him and express their concern. David sat on the sidelines and waited for the girls' race to finish. He was anxious to see Christy.

After the race she appeared, wet with rain and

sweat, but rosy-cheeked and triumphant. "Gina broke the girls' league record...and...I broke my own record," she said breathlessly. "What about you?"

"Second," he said, reaching to squeeze her hand. "My knee went out."

"Oh no," she cried, noticing the ice pack. "Is it real bad?"

He shrugged. "Only when I run. I don't think it's any worse than usual."

"At least you can rest it now."

"Yeah, until track season."

Christy shook her head. "You're a glutton for punishment."

"I just like all the attention." He grinned. "Here, give me a hand."

Christy took the ice pack from David, and he stood up awkwardly. He put an arm around her shoulder and they made their way slowly to where King High's team was congregated.

"Way to go," David said, shaking hands with the rival team members.

"Thanks. Sorry about your knee."

David nodded. "It'll be fine by spring. I'll see you guys on the track." They all laughed together.

Tracy joined them and Christy put her other arm around her friend. "I feel great," she said. "I'm one lucky person."

"Me too," said David, hugging her tightly.

"Me three," chimed in Tracy.

"The rain's stopped," David noted.

"And the sun's coming out," Tracy added.

"You're not going to believe this," Christy said, "but look up there."

Following her pointed finger, they could see a shimmering rainbow's arc emerging in the brilliant sky.

THE END

continued from p. 61

She looked at David. He looks so handsome, she thought. I love him so much.

A few minutes later, when they were in bed, David made a tentative move for the pocket of his jeans, which lay on the floor.

"What are you doing?" Christy asked.

"I brought something...you know, for protection. Do you think we should use it?"

Christy hesitated. She knew it was foolish to take risks, but the whole subject of birth control seemed so embarrassing and unromantic. Still, she thought, Shawna had a baby when she was sixteen, and that was *really* unromantic.

What did Christy do?

Choice Point 9A

If you think Christy
insisted on using a condom

turn to page 110.

Choice Point 9B

If you think Christy
decided not to use a condom

turn to page 129.

continued from p. 109

"Better safe than sorry, I guess," Christy said with a grimace. "I hope you know what you're doing 'cause I haven't got a clue."

David laughed and felt some of his embarrassment begin to fade. "We'll just have to figure it out, babe." He tore open the packet.

Over the next couple of weeks Christy and David felt very close to each other. They spent whatever time together they could manage, including a couple of brief encounters at David's when no one else was home.

They had mixed feelings about these short but passionate meetings. Christy found it hard to relax, thinking that David's mother or brother might arrive home unexpectedly. She also was fairly certain they could be safer using some kind of contraceptive foam along with the condom, but she didn't have the nerve to buy it in the drugstore. She thought about asking Tracy to go with her, but it still seemed awfully embarrassing. With these matters on her mind, she was beginning to feel that sex was pushing her and David apart rather than together.

For his part, David also worried about just using condoms. He thought he should ask Christy about getting some foam, but he didn't know how to ask. What if she suggested he get it himself? As if buying rubbers wasn't bad enough! Or maybe she should get on the pill. But he wasn't comfortable bringing up that subject either. He thought he'd rather wait for her to mention it.

David went to the library and found books and magazine articles under the headings of "birth control," "contraception," and "sexuality." A lot of the information was interesting, but it didn't help him discover what was right for him and Christy—or how to talk to her about it. He decided to try talking to his friend Mike Rothman at work.

"Hey, Mike, can I ask you something personal?" David asked as they were chopping vegetables for the pizzas.

"Sure, whatever," Mike replied. "My life's an open book."

"Probably X-rated."

Mike laughed. "Not as much as it should be. What do you want to know?"

"Did you ever...you know...have a close call with a girl?"

Mike put down his knife and stared at David. "Christy's not pregnant, is she?"

"Did you ever...you know...have a close call with a girl?"

"No. And I don't want her to be, either."

"Well, when I was going out with Karen, she thought she was pregnant once."

"But she wasn't."

"Nope. But we were pretty nervous for a while there."

"It must have freaked you out."

"Yeah, it was pretty scary. It makes you stop and think about what you want to do with the rest of your life."

"Weren't you using anything?"

"Well, usually I had a rubber, but sometimes—you know how it is—we just got carried away."

"So what about now?" David wanted to know. "Are you more careful now, or what?"

Mike turned back to his work with a short laugh. "To tell you the truth, I haven't been out much lately."

The phone rang, and while Mike was taking the order two groups of customers came in. So much for that conversation, thought David.

On the way home from work, David tried to think of someone else to talk to. Someone with experience. Someone he could trust. Who's left? he wondered. Mom? No way. She'd probably handle it great, but I'd be way too embarrassed. Then he thought about his sister Teresa and her husband Eddie. They're only a few years older

than me so it feels pretty comfortable with them. I guess they must know a few things, seeing as how they've been married a couple of years and they have a kid. As a matter of fact, Vanessa was born rather soon after the wedding, now that I stop to think about it. I'll have to ask Mom about it.

"She was expecting, all right," said Irene Velásquez, nodding emphatically. "I thought you knew that. Everybody else did."

David blushed.

His mom ruffled his hair. "Silly boy. You probably didn't take your nose out of a book long enough to see what was going on."

"Weren't you upset about it?"

"I'd have to say I was at first," she said thoughtfully. "Not so much because they got married so young. I liked Eddie and I think they probably would've gotten married anyway in a year or so. But having a baby then seemed like such a hardship. Teresa had to drop out of college and Eddie didn't get to advance as much in his work as he'd hoped. But he's managing to get ahead a little now. He thinks in about five years he'll be able to have his own business. I think they've done

very well, considering."

It's good for them, I guess, David thought, but I sure don't see Christy and me doing that kind of domestic scene. I wonder if they'd be embarrassed if I asked them about birth control, since it would bring up the subject of their "early" marriage. Well, at least Teresa's always been easy to talk to—and Christy likes her a lot.

Still, he wondered how to bring up the subject of sex with his sister and her husband. It would be embarrassing no matter what. There was a good chance that Eddie would make a joke out of it. He's always asking if I got laid yet, David thought. Ha. This would be a good opportunity to tell him I did. Maybe I'll stop over this week, he thought.

What did David do?

Choice Point 10A

If you think David decided **not to talk** with Teresa and Eddie about sex

turn to page 142.

Choice Point 10B

If you think David decided **to talk** to Teresa and Eddie

turn to page 148.

continued from p. 61

"Let's do something," Christy said. "Let's go out and get a coke or something to eat and talk about this a little."

"Okay. But we can talk here. I won't attack you or anything."

"I know that. But I might attack you. I'd just feel more relaxed if we went somewhere else."

Turn to page 118.

continued from p. 101

Christy talked to her friends about her conflicting feelings.

"Talk to him," Serena advised.

"Tell him," said Tracy. "Sure it's embarrassing, but you still have to do it."

"It would be more embarrassing to get pregnant," Serena observed.

"You're right about that," said Christy. If I can talk to Mom about this stuff, she thought, I guess I can talk to David about it. One of us has to bring up the dreaded subject of birth control.

Turn to the next page.

continued from p. 35, 116 or 117

Over a plate of french fries, Christy and David talked about their feelings for each other and what they wanted both in the present and the future. Christy decided she should go to the family planning clinic to get more information about birth control.

"Do you think I'm overdoing it?" she asked. "Am I being too nervous? Do you think I'm a scaredy-cat?"

"I think you're being very level-headed," David replied. "You're being responsible enough for both of us and I think that's great."

David walked Christy home. At her door he said, "You've been awfully quiet the last few minutes. It's not like you. Is something wrong?"

"Oh, no, not really. I've just been thinking how I'll feel going to the clinic. It's still scary to me."

"Why don't you ask Tracy or someone to go with you?"

"I was thinking about that. How would *you* like to come with me?"

David laughed. "Me? You're kidding."

"I'm not."

Abruptly he stopped laughing.

"I mean we're in this together, right? Earlier you said it was great that I was taking responsibility for both of us. I've been thinking about it and I think we should share it."

"Well, I see your point, but I never heard of a guy going to a family planning clinic."

"I'm sure some guys must go. They give out condoms."

"They could just give 'em to the girls and then the girls give 'em to their boyfriends."

"Well, maybe." She was feeling exasperated. "That's beside the point anyway. The point is I think we should go together."

"Let me think about it, okay? It's a totally new idea to me. I think I understand your point. But—I don't know. I promise I'll think about it."

"You do that."

"I'd better go." He bent to give her a brief kiss. "I love you."

"I love you too," she said. After watching him jog off down the street, she turned and went into the house, slamming the door behind her. "Men!" She shook her head in dismay and went to call Tracy.

David was up late doing his homework. It took

him longer than usual because he was having trouble concentrating. When he finally closed the last book, he sighed. I wish life was as easy as calculus, he thought. I know I should do this thing. It would mean a lot to her and I might learn something too. But I just can't see sitting in a waiting room with a bunch of women all looking at me. And what if somebody I know sees me there?

❀ ❀ ❀

Christy waited patiently over the next few days. She knew David was having difficulty with the idea of going with her. But one day she felt he'd had enough time.

"What's the verdict?"

"About what?"

"Don't play dumb. I haven't forgotten, in case that's what you were hoping. Are you coming with me or not?"

What did David do?

Choice Point 11A

If you think David decided
not to go with Christy
to the family planning clinic

turn to page 122.

Choice Point 11B

If you think David decided
that he would go with Christy

turn to page 154.

continued from p. 121

David looked uncomfortable. "Well," he began, "I've thought about it a lot. I really have. And I've decided I just can't do it."

"Oh."

"I'm sorry. I know I've disappointed you. I really love you, but I just don't think it's fair for you to expect me to go."

"But you expect me to go."

"Because the clinic's a place for women. I'd be like a fish out of water."

"Well, men go there too sometimes. I called and asked."

David paused for a moment. "Nobody I know would be caught dead there. I'm perfectly willing to buy stuff at the drugstore, but this is your baby."

"Baby?"

"Excuse me—poor choice of words. This is your department. You're the one who'll be on pills—not me."

Christy sighed and shook her head sadly. "I guess Trace can go with me."

"Sure she will. It'll work out, you'll see." He gave her shoulder a little shake. "C'mon Christy, it's not the end of the world."

"I know. I was just hoping...."

"Listen, the Christmas dance is coming up next week...."

"I know."

"Well, you know I'm not much of a dancer, but I thought you might like to go."

"You mean you'll force yourself to go for me."

"Hey, Chris, snap out of it. I want to go with you. I wouldn't ask you if I didn't."

She gave him a small smile. "I'm sorry. I know I'm being a pain. I'd like to go. I was gonna ask you, but I was feeling kind of unsure of myself—with this clinic stuff and all. I wasn't sure how you were feeling about me."

He pulled her close. "You know how I feel about you. Nothing's going to change that."

Christy and her friend Serena went shopping together for their dresses for the Christmas dance.

"Everything looks fantastic on you," Christy complained. "You have such a gorgeous body."

"Get serious," Serena replied. "I'm flat as a board. At least you have curves."

"Curves! I've got too many curves," Christy moaned. "I've got rolls."

"You do not. Stop exaggerating. Here, try this black one. It's strapless, it'll look great on you."

"It's beautiful. But I've never worn a strapless dress. How will it stay up?"

"It'll stay up. You have what you need to hold it up."

Christy struggled into the dress and Serena zipped her up. She was pleasantly surprised at the effect. "Not too bad," she murmured.

"You look great. The way the top goes in makes your waist look real small. I think you should get it. David'll go crazy."

"He's driving me crazy, that's for sure," Christy muttered as she pulled the dress off over her head.

"What's wrong anyway? You've been acting weird all day."

"Oh, I don't know. David and I aren't exactly seeing eye to eye lately." She zipped her jeans and slipped on her shirt.

"Really? What's the problem? Or don't you want to talk about it?"

"Actually, I'd be interested in your opinion."

Christy paid for her dress and, as they walked to the next store, she related her feelings about going to the family planning clinic.

"It sounds like you're real disappointed in David," Serena observed.

"Yeah, I guess I am."

"And it's affecting your relationship. Like you're kind of holding back from him."

"I suppose so."

"Do you think he knows how badly you feel?"

"I don't know. I don't want to be unreasonable, you know? I mean he's got a right to feel the way he does."

"That's right, but so do you. Let's look in here." As they sorted through the racks of party dresses, Serena continued: "You know, the hardest thing for me—since I've been going with James—has been to learn how to talk about how I feel. I always thought my feelings were *my* problem and that I shouldn't burden other people with them. Sometimes I still have trouble letting people know if I'm upset or mad about something. It's like I think they aren't going to love me anymore if they know the truth."

"But you and James seem to have such an ideal relationship."

"Well, I think I'm lucky to have someone as understanding as James. But we've both had to work to keep it together. We have to take risks sometimes and say stuff that might upset the other person."

"That's so scary though."

"Yeah, but sometimes you've got to do it. Otherwise you just store up all kinds of negative feelings and then they come out in other ways. I mean people drink or use drugs or get into sex

before they're ready—all sorts of things—because they can't face up to their real feelings and can't share them with anyone. I've seen it happen. I know."

"It all sounds so reasonable."

"But still scary, right?"

Christy nodded.

Serena smiled. "Well, I think if someone loves you, he'll want you to share your feelings with him—even the negative ones. And if he can't handle it, you might as well find out now."

"I'll definitely think about it.... Look, did you see this one?"

"Gold lamé? Are you kidding? My dad would never let me wear that."

"Try it on anyway. Just to see."

"Oh, all right. I'm gonna try this white one, too."

Serena looked stunning in the clingy gold dress. Christy's eyes nearly popped out. "Wow! Are you sure you can't get it? You look fantastic! If you brushed you hair out all around your head, you'd look like some kind of goddess."

"It is...um...nice," Serena acknowledged. "But no way could I wear it. I'd better try the other one."

"It's beautiful too. It goes great with your dark skin."

"You don't think it's too...pure?"

"Well, Serena, you are pure."

"That doesn't mean I want to look it."

"Well, it's purer than the gold one, that's for sure. But it's sexy, too. The way the material—what is this? chiffon?—the way it falls is real nice. It's graceful. You look...uh...ethereal."

"Ethereal."

"Yeah. I'm not sure what it means, but that's how you look."

Serena laughed, "Okay, I'll buy it. You've convinced me."

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Afterwards, Christy went over their conversation in her head. She'd made the clinic appointment for the following week, so she knew she should act fast if she wanted to give David a chance to change his mind. And even if he doesn't change his mind, she thought, it'll be good to get this stuff off my chest. But what if he gets mad? What if he feels I'm a nag? What if he stops loving me? If you're going to make your move, Christy my friend, she told herself, you'd better make it soon.

What did Christy do?

Choice Point 12A

If you think Christy decided
not to share her feelings with David

turn to page 138.

Choice Point 12B

If you think Christy decided
to tell David how upset she was

turn to page 145.

continued from p. 109

"No, it'll be okay," she said. I hope, she added to herself.

David, for his part, was happy enough to give up the quest. He'd been wondering how he'd get the thing on and if he'd live through the humiliation of fumbling around like an idiot. Next time I'll be more responsible, he thought. With an inward sigh of relief, he turned back to Christy.

But next time turned out not to be any different. Both Christy and David were reluctant to face the possible embarrassment involved in a frank discussion of sex. It seemed easier to do it than to talk about it.

Turn to page 131.

continued from p. 88

It was easy for David to just go along with the mood of the moment. It was easier than stopping to think or to talk about what was going on. It was easier than facing the potential embarrassment of putting on a condom for the first time. It was easier for Christy, too, to simply turn off the questions, doubts, and fears that were nagging at her and to let herself be swept along by the pleasure of the moment. But in the long run, it turned out not to be quite so easy.

Christy and David didn't find a lot of opportunities to be alone, but when they had a chance, they took advantage of it. Privately, Christy worried about not using any kind of birth control and she planned to bring up the subject with David. It seemed unromantic though, so she kept putting it off.

David was careful to always have a condom with him, but he still found the idea of actually using one to be, at best, complicated and, at worst, humiliating. Still, he kept meaning to ask Christy how she felt about having sex without birth control. He privately hoped she'd get birth control pills, but he didn't want to seem pushy.

Turn to the next page.

continued from p. 129 or 130

Besides, things seemed to be going so well. Christy's period was on time in early December, and the month passed quickly, filled with activity, warmth and fun. Christy's period arrived as scheduled in January, too, but in February, the week before the premiere performance of *The Man Who Came to Dinner*, Christy presented David with some unsettling news.

"My period's late."

"You're kidding."

She shook her head and stared straight ahead through the foggy windshield. It was a Wednesday night and she'd called him earlier to ask if he'd go to the library with her. She'd picked him up after dinner and now they were in the library parking lot. It was freezing outside, but still warm in the car.

"Oh no," said David softly. He struggled to fight back the panic that was rising within him. "How late are you?"

"About a week. Maybe a little more."

"Is that unusual? I mean you're not always exactly on time."

"I am within two or three days. This is the latest I've ever been."

"Maybe it's nerves. I've heard worrying can

make it late."

"Maybe. But what if it isn't?" She looked at him then.

It seemed to David that her face was very pale and her eyes huge and dark. He could see they had shadows under them. He reached out and pulled her toward him, holding her as close as he could in the cramped confines of the small car with the gearshift between them.

She clung to him. In spite of the warmth, she was shivering. "I'm so scared," she whispered.

He stroked her hair and wondered who he felt more sorry for—her or himself. I can't believe how stupid we've been, he thought. Although he wasn't particularly religious, he found himself saying a prayer: Please, let her not be pregnant. I'll never take chances again, I promise. Please, let us off this one time.

With more calmness than he felt, he said, "Before we get any more freaked about this, we should find out for sure. Can you have a test or something?"

"Yeah. I guess I could go to the clinic. Or I was thinking I could try one of those home test kits."

"Do those work?"

"I think so. My mom used one before she had Robbie. She was so happy when it came out

positive." Her voice broke and she began to sob. "Oh, David, if I'm pregnant I don't know what I'll do. I can't believe we let this happen. Why didn't you use something? Or make me get on the pill? I don't want to end up like Shawna. I don't want a baby and I hate the idea of an abortion."

"Shh." He patted her shoulder and rubbed her back, feeling his own tears threatening to well up. "We have to take this one step at a time. Where can we get one of those tests?"

"Any drugstore, I guess."

"Let's go get one now."

She looked alarmed. "Now? Just walk into a store and get a pregnancy test kit. Oh, David, I can't! What if somebody saw us?"

"We'll go over to the other side of town. Let's just get it over with. Either that or you make an appointment tomorrow for a test."

"Oh no, that would be even worse. I don't want anyone to know."

"Then let's go find a drugstore that's open. Then it'll only be between you and me and some store clerk who doesn't know us from Adam and Eve."

"Okay. Okay, I'll do it. Do you have any money? I only have about three dollars."

"I'll pay for it, don't worry. How much do you

think it'll cost?" He took out his wallet and thumbed through the bills.

"I don't know. Maybe around ten dollars."

"I can handle it. You'd better let me drive."

They found a drugstore on the far side of town and bought the test kit. Christy had felt ready to collapse with embarrassment, but the clerk didn't even seem to notice.

"That'll be $9.95," she said.

David handed her a ten dollar bill feeling too numb to even care about her reaction. His mind was on the outcome of the test.

"Thank you," said the clerk with a smile. "Have a nice evening."

"I don't believe it," Christy muttered as they left the store.

In the car, under a street lamp, they read the instructions for the pregnancy test.

"I guess I have to wait until morning to do it," Christy said. "I don't know how I'll sleep."

But she did sleep. And woke up feeling alert and cheerful. She was halfway out of bed before she remembered. Refusing to give in to the gloom that suddenly threatened to sweep over her, she grabbed her purse, which held the test kit, and

Christy felt ready to collapse with embarrassment.

headed for the bathroom.

She reread the instructions carefully. How am I going to go in this little cup? she wondered. But she managed and then she tore open the packet containing the test kit that would reveal whether or not she was pregnant.

There was a rattle of the doorknob, followed by loud banging. "Let me in," Robbie demanded. "I gotta go."

"You'll have to wait."

"I can't."

"Go use the other bathroom."

"It's too cold in there."

"Tough, Robbie, you can't come in." Robbie went off wailing and Christy waited anxiously. There was a knock on the door. "Chris?" her stepfather said. "What's taking you so long? There's a line out here."

"I'm going as fast as I can," she answered. "I'll be out in a minute." Any second, she was thinking, this is going to turn pink. That'll mean I'm pregnant for sure. She watched and waited. And waited. It's not turning, she thought. She read the instructions again, just to be sure. Slowly, the truth was beginning to dawn on her. I'm not, she thought. I'm not! She checked the test stick once more. Nothing. *I'm not!* She felt like yelling. Like singing.

Bam! Bam! at the door. "Christy Ann, are you all right?"

"Coming. Right now!" She emptied the cup into the toilet and flushed. Stuffing the rest of the test kit back into its box, she shoved the whole thing back into her purse and unlocked the door.

"Good morning." She gave her stepdad her biggest smile and a pat on the arm. "And good morning to you!" She tried to pinch Robbie's cheek but he dashed past her, clutching himself.

While she dressed, Christy sang snatches of the "Hallelujah Chorus" to herself, under her breath. She left for school early so she could wait for David outside his first period class.

Even from a distance David could tell the news was good. There was something about the way she was standing, her head up and shoulders back. When he got close enough to see her smile, he knew for certain. "Thank heaven," he said, hugging her. He remembered his vow of the previous night.

THE END

continued from p. 128

Maybe sometime after the dance I'll talk to him, Christy thought. I don't want to upset things before that and end up having a miserable time. Or even worse, end up not going at all.

Christy and David double-dated to the dance with Danny and Lisa. Lisa looked stunning in pale blue satin. It was exciting to see all their friends dressed up in their holiday finery. Serena and her boyfriend James were there. Even Tracy had finally broken down—she was there with Tom Johnson.

After an evening of dancing, talking, teasing and laughing, it was time to go. Serena asked Christy and David to come with her and some friends to get something to eat.

"That sounds like fun," said Christy. "Can Lisa and Danny come too?"

"Sure. The more the merrier."

"Just a second, Chris," broke in David, drawing her aside. "I thought we could go over to my place for a while. My mom's got a date tonight and she'll be out pretty late."

"What about Danny and Lisa?"

"They can go out with the others. I already checked with Dan."

"Sounds like you've got it all worked out."

"Don't you want to come over?"

"Yeah, I do. It's just that...." Her voice trailed off. As much as she wanted to be with David in their own special world, she also wanted to be with her other friends and to share this festive time with them.

"So are you coming?" Serena wanted to know.

Christy looked at David. I love him so much, she thought. I can't bear to hurt his feelings.

"Oh, no. I guess not. But thanks. You all have fun, okay?"

Christy rode in silence to David's. She berated herself for not standing up for her own feelings.

When they arrived at the apartment she tried to put on a cheerful front for David's sake, but she felt like she was play acting.

David didn't seem to notice. "You're so beautiful," he murmured.

Even when they began to kiss and touch each other, Christy felt her heart just wasn't in it. She wondered what her friends were doing, and she scolded herself for not paying more attention to David. Then she found herself feeling resentful. He doesn't take my feelings into account, she thought. He won't even go to the clinic with me.

"Is something wrong, babe?"

"No, not really."

"It doesn't seem like you're enjoying this."

"I'm sorry, I guess I'm just tired." She felt like crying with frustration. She'd come with him in order to please him, but she didn't seem to be doing a very good job of pleasing either him or herself. I love him, she told herself. The least I can do is act like it. She managed to push her hurt and anger aside temporarily, but the feelings continued to grow.

Over the next few weeks Christy's moodiness became contagious, and David found himself beginning to resent her quietness and remoteness.

"If your feelings about me have changed, Chris, just tell me and let's get it over with."

"They haven't changed," she insisted, but deep inside she wasn't sure if that was true or not.

David searched for reasons to explain the change in Christy. Maybe she likes someone else, he thought. He watched her closely when they were with other people. When they hadn't seen each other for a while, he questioned her about her whereabouts.

Christy was offended by his apparent lack of confidence in her. Her hurt and anger increased. And the longer she went without expressing her

feelings, the harder it became to talk about them or even to know what they were.

Turn to page 143.

continued from p. 115

The week passed and David still hadn't gone to see Teresa and Eddie. The longer he waited, the less enthusiastic he became about talking with them about something as personal as sex.

The holiday season passed quickly for Christy and David, with parties, presents, and occasionally passion.

When they did get the chance to make love, which wasn't often, David found himself feeling increasingly apprehensive. Christy seemed quiet and withdrawn although she denied anything was wrong. Each imagined what the other was feeling but was reluctant to say anything directly for fear of discovering that the other's feelings had changed.

Go to the next page.

continued from p. 141 or 142

David and Christy felt themselves trapped on a downward spiral. They kept up the appearance of being together, but privately each of them wondered how long it would last.

The dress rehearsal for *The Man Who Came to Dinner,* which fell on the eve of Valentine's Day, was agony. Christy and David had to flirt, gaze into each other's eyes, touch each other, and generally carry on as though they were falling in love. What had been fun and exciting a couple of months before was now an ordeal that somehow had to be endured.

Their uneasiness showed up in their performances. Mr. Peña, the drama coach, had an idea of what the problem was and he called each of them aside separately.

"I suggest that you sit down and talk to each each other," he said. "You need to work out your differences and clear the air. Otherwise you're going to have to work a lot harder to cover up the antagonism between you. It's much too obvious and it just will not do. If you can't get the quality of your performance back to where it used to be, I'll have to consider letting your understudies take the parts. And that would make me very sad indeed."

Later on at home, Christy went over Mr. Peña's words. I know he's right, she thought. David and I do need to talk. But I wish he'd call me. That would be a sign that he really cares about my feelings.

David, meanwhile, was hoping Christy would call. He was afraid a call to her would be a sign of weakness. I'm so scared of losing her, he thought, as he waited for the phone to ring. He got out the Valentine card he'd bought for Christy and stared at it as tears blurred his eyes.

THE END

continued from p. 128

I have to get this off my chest, Christy decided. I'll go crazy if I have to keep my feelings in much longer. If he gets mad and I miss the dance, that's just the way it'll have to be. Maybe I can take the dress back and get a refund.... Stop it, you jerk, she commanded herself. Stop fantasizing about the bad things that could happen. Just tell him how you feel.

After school the next day, Christy found David and launched right in. "Can we go somewhere and talk? It's important."

David nodded, looking very alarmed.

Christy patted his arm. "It's okay. I just have to get something off my chest."

They walked to a small coffee shop and settled into a quiet corner booth. David looked at Christy uneasily.

"Okay." She cleared her throat. "I have to tell you something because keeping it in is driving me nuts. I still feel real upset that you won't go to the clinic with me. I had an appointment, but then I canceled it because I got to thinking that I really, truly believe we should go together. I mean if sex is something people do together then they should take the responsibility together. And I'm really hurt that you just want to share the fun part

with me and not the hard part. I'm hurt and I'm mad." She looked directly at him. "There! I said it."

"Oh," David said. "Wow." He fiddled with his water glass. "I didn't know you felt that strongly."

"I guess I didn't either until I really stopped to think about it."

"To tell you the truth, I've been feeling pretty bad too. Guilty, I guess." He sighed. "I'm just a spineless worm."

Christy nodded. "But you don't have to be."

"Everything you say makes sense, but...."

"See if this makes sense: You go with me to the clinic, or we don't have sex. Period."

"Whoa, hold on. You didn't even let me finish. I was gonna say, 'but this is scary for me. Give me a little time to get used to the idea and I'll do it.' That's what I was going to say."

"You mean you're scared too?"

"You better believe it."

"And you'll really go with me?"

"That's what I said. I might be a worm but I'm not a liar."

"You're not a worm. I think you're wonderful." She smiled and moved closer to him in the booth.

"You're not still mad at me?"

"Uh uh. I feel great. How about you?"

He put his arm across her shoulders and squeezed. "I'm fine."

"I've missed you," she said. "It feels like we've been apart for a while. It's good to be back."

David nodded. "I missed you too. I finally figured out that if we start sharing important things like this now, it will be better for us in the long run."

Turn to page 154.

continued from p. 115

Teresa greeted David with a big smile. "Come in, honey. It's great to see you. How's everything?"

"Everything's good." He bent to scoop up his year-old niece from the floor. "You're a big girl, Vanessa," he said as the baby gurgled happily. "You're gonna be as chubby as your mom pretty soon."

"Thanks," Teresa snapped him with the dish towel she was holding. "You want a soda or something?"

"Whatcha got?" David followed her into the kitchen and opened the refrigerator. He took out a plastic pitcher and sniffed at the contents.

"It's grape juice. Get yourself a glass if you want some."

"So where's Eddie?" David asked, sitting down at the kitchen table.

"He's still at the shop. It'll be a half hour or so before he gets home. He'll be glad to see you." She put away the last of the dishes from the counter and turned to the stove to stir a simmering pot of beans.

"Smells good," David said.

"Thanks. You want to stay for dinner?"

"Oh, thanks.... I don't know if I should stay

that long."

"So what's on your mind? What brings you over here? How're you and Christy doing?"

Boy, she doesn't waste any time getting to the point, David thought. "We're doing fine. Mostly. I just wanted to see how you guys were doing."

"Well, look around. This is it. Eddie's at work. I'm at home. Vanessa's here messing things up as fast as I can take care of them. Aren't you, sweetie?" She bent to extract her daughter from the wastebasket. She settled Vanessa into her highchair and tied a bib around her neck.

"Are you sorry you got pregnant so young?" David asked suddenly.

She turned to him in surprise. "Sorry? No, I couldn't say I was sorry. I wouldn't trade Vanessa for anything in the world. But..." she added, pulling out a chair and sitting down opposite David, "if I had it to do over again, I'd be more careful. I'd wait at least until I finished junior college and had worked for a while. And I know Eddie would've liked to be a little further ahead in his career before having so much responsibility." She looked at him sharply. "Why'd you ask? You're not planning on being a father soon, are you?"

"Oh no, not at all." He laughed nervously.

"I take it you and Christy are...uh...pretty

serious about each other?"

"Yeah, we are."

"Well, I hope you're being careful. You're a smart guy, Davey, you must know the facts of life."

"Yeah, I know the facts, but...I don't know. I seem to have trouble talking to her about things."

"I've noticed," Teresa said, "that a lot of times people seem to find it easier to have sex than to talk about it.... I was that way—and you can see what it got me." She nodded toward the baby. "You've got to talk, and you've got to be sure you know what you're doing. For your sake and for hers."

"I know you're right," David said. "I wasn't sure I could talk to you, even, but here I am."

"Talking is a whole lot easier than dealing with a pregnancy, believe me."

"Yeah, I'm sure you're right about that, too."

"If I'm not being too nosy, can I ask what exactly you two are doing about protection?"

"We're using—uh—condoms."

"That's good. Are you using one every time?"

David nodded.

"What does Christy think about all this? Has she seen a doctor or anything?"

"I don't think she's been to a doctor about this. I don't exactly know what she thinks."

"Well, if I can make a suggestion, why don't you two go over to the family planning clinic and get some counseling."

"Me? Go to a clinic?"

"Yes, you. Eddie went with me. 'Course it was after the baby was born instead of before."

"I thought clinics were for women."

"Guys go too, David. Maybe not as many go as should, but they do go. Just because the woman's the one who gets pregnant doesn't mean the whole burden should rest on her. A lot of times guys don't think of the consequences to themselves—being tied down, supporting a child, postponing plans and dreams, and going through a lot of pain, too. You have so much ahead of you...."

She got up to release Vanessa from the highchair where she'd been banging on the tray and squirming to get out. She took the baby to the sink and washed her face and hands and tried to get the bits of mashed banana out of her hair. Then she put Vanessa down and set about cleaning the highchair and the surrounding floor.

"How old's Christy? Sixteen? I know she's not ready for this kind of life. Both of you have a lot of living to do." She picked up the baby and set her on David's lap. "Go change her for me will you?"

Thank goodness she's only wet, thought David as he struggled to get Vanessa out of the old diaper and into a new one. "Aww, Vanessa, don't turn over now. C'mon back here, you." He caught her leg as she tried to crawl away and gently turned her over once again. She reached for his glasses. "Here take 'em," he said. "Anything, just hold still for thirty seconds."

He was washing off his glasses in the kitchen sink when Eddie came home.

"Hey, man, good to see you," he said heartily, clapping David on the back. "How're you doing? How's your girlfriend?" He winked.

David laughed and shook his head. "Eddie, your mind's in the gutter," he said, drying his glasses on a dish towel.

"I suppose your mind's on higher matters like calculus, geology, economics. Am I right?"

"Well...."

"As a matter of fact," Teresa broke in, "David was just telling me that he and Christy have an appointment to go to the family planning clinic."

Both David and Eddie looked at her in surprise. Eddie broke into a grin.

"Far out, man. Good for you." There was real admiration in his voice.

"Teresa, you've got a big mouth," David said.

"I know," his sister replied sweetly. "Would

you like to stay for dinner?"

"Why not? I'll go call Mom and tell her."

When David suggested to Christy that they go to the family planning clinic, she was both surprised and relieved.

"I was thinking it might be a good idea," she said, "but I felt kind of strange about bringing it up."

"I know what you mean," said David. "But I figured if we can do it, we ought to be able to talk about it."

"I agree," said Christy. She grinned at David and leaned over to kiss him.

THE END

continued from p. 121 or 147

"I hope you know," David muttered under his breath, "how much I love you. I wouldn't go through this for anyone else in the world."

They sat side by side in the bright waiting room of the family planning clinic. David looked around discreetly. There were three women waiting and one young man. One of the women held a baby on her lap. Everyone seemed relaxed and friendly. The man smiled and nodded at David and the baby cooed and waved its arms. David smiled in spite of himself. At least I'm not the only guy, he thought.

In a few minutes a pleasant-looking woman came out and spoke to them: "Christy Jacobs and David Velásquez? I'm Janice Nomura." She shook hands with each of them. "It's good to meet you. Shall we go into my office?"

When they were all seated in her office Ms. Nomura smiled. "I must tell you," she said, "how nice it is to see a young man in the clinic. I'm afraid a lot of them just don't have the maturity you obviously have."

"Oh. Uh, thanks." David hoped he wasn't blushing.

Christy grinned at him.

Ms. Nomura continued. "What exactly is it

"We need general information on our choices."

that we can help you with today?"

"Well," Christy began, "I was wondering if I should start taking birth control pills. Or if we should use something else."

"Basically," David added, "I think we need general information on our choices."

The counselor nodded, and for the next half hour she explained various methods to them, including the advantages and possible problems. Although Christy and David were aware of the basic facts of reproduction, they both discovered things they hadn't known. And they both relaxed enough to begin asking questions.

"So what you're saying is there's no time of the month when it's safe to have sex without using birth control," said Christy.

"That's right. Especially for young women whose menstrual cycles haven't become completely regular. We do have counseling for 'natural family planning,' but only about a third of women are regular enough to consider it and it takes them a number of months to figure out their own particular cycle. Even then they have to pay special attention to their bodies' signals. It just doesn't seem practical for teenagers. Also some young people think that if they stand up during intercourse or if they don't have sex very often, a pregnancy can't occur. Those ideas are

totally false. I can't stress enough the need for you to be protected *every* time you have sex."

"If we decide to use condoms," David asked, "should we use something else with them?"

"Yes," said Ms. Nomura. "We recommend that you use a spermicide for added protection. You can use condoms with a sperm-killing lubricant, or you can use a contraceptive barrier such as foam, film, or the sponge." She showed them the various products. "I can give you samples of each."

"Also," she went on, "if you use condoms, you have to be sure to use them consistently and correctly. No matter how much control the man thinks he has over ejaculation, he must wear a condom every time to ensure protection and he must put it on his erect penis before there's any genital contact."

She showed them a diagram. "When you put the condom on, be sure to leave about a half inch of space at the tip and roll it all the way down to the base of the penis. Then, soon after ejaculation, you should withdraw while holding the base of the condom firmly. And, of course, you need to store your condoms in a cool, dry, *convenient* place—and never, ever reuse one."

"What about the pill?" asked Christy. "If I start taking it, will it be safe to have sex right

away?"

"No. You'll need to wait until you've been taking the pills for a month. If you have sexual intercourse in the meantime, you'll need to use another form of protection."

"When could I start taking them?"

"You'll need to fill out a medical history form for us and have a pelvic examination. If there's nothing in your exam that indicates you're not a good candidate for the pill, you can start when you have your next period. Is there anything else you'd like to know?"

"Uh, I was wondering," David said, "if anyone could find out about our coming here."

The counselor smiled. "Not unless they saw you in the waiting room. Our records are completely confidential."

"That's good," Christy said.

"There's one more thing I'd like to mention," said Ms. Nomura. "This shouldn't be a problem for you two at this point if you haven't had previous sexual contact with anyone else. But one thing you may need to think about sometime is sexually transmitted disease. You need to know that when you have sex with someone, in a way it's like having sex with every partner that person ever had and every partner those partners ever had and so on. I'm going to give you some

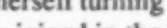
literature about the most common STDs for you to read at your leisure. One of the main things to remember is that a condom provides a lot of protection against a variety of diseases. It's not a guarantee, but it does reduce the risk of transmitting diseases such as chlamydia, herpes and AIDS. And if you use a spermicide too, you add even more protection." She held out some pamphlets.

Christy took them with a shudder. "Maybe I should join a monastery."

David laughed. "You mean a convent. A monastery's for men."

Christy felt herself turning bright pink, but she good-naturedly joined in the laughter.

"If you'll just go back into the waiting room, they'll call you for your exam," Ms. Nomura said to Christy. "It's been very nice meeting you both."



Christy began taking birth control pills in January. Although both she and David were anxious to begin making love, they decided to wait until she'd been on the pill for a month in order to be completely safe. They also wanted their "first time" to be special, so they were making plans for the occasion.

"I can't believe you're actually *planning* to lose your virginity," Tracy said to Christy.

"I'm not exactly going to *lose* it. That sounds so careless and irresponsible."

Tracy laughed. "Okay, so where is this... uh...event going to take place?"

"I don't know. David thought we could go to a motel, but that's kind of expensive. Plus—I don't know—the idea makes me nervous. So we're trying to think of something."

"When's it gonna be?"

"Well, if we can manage to be alone, it looks like it'll be right about Valentine's day."

"Aww. How romantic. Hey! That's the night of your performance, too."

"It's gonna be a busy week."

It was a busy week: dress rehearsal one night, followed by a performance and cast party the next night, followed by another performance the night after that.

At the beginning of the week David called Christy. He tried to keep the excitement out of his voice.

"Hey, whatcha doin' after our last show?" he asked.

"Hey, I don't know. What's going on? Your voice sounds funny."

"Check it out, babe. Mom just told me she's going out of town that night. She's going to go visit an old friend."

"So we can be alone at your place?"

"Yeah, we sure can. I already talked to Dan. He promised to lose himself that night—he can go over to a friend's."

"That's super. I was getting worried."

"Me too. And get this: Mom almost didn't go because she didn't want to hurt my feelings by missing the second night's performance."

"But she's going to the first one, isn't she?"

"Yeah, but you know how she is. Anyway I assured her that it was fine and that I didn't mind at all."

"Well, at least you were sincere."

"Oh, I was.... Well, I just wanted to let you know. I'd better finish my homework now. I'll see you at school tomorrow."

"Okay. Bye. I love you."

"Love you, too."

The play was a smashing success. When the second night's performance was over, Christy

and David found themselves elated—and exhausted. Some of the members of the cast wanted Christy and David to go out with them after the show, but they said they were planning to have their own party. Tracy winked at Christy as they left the auditorium.

"That was so great," Christy sighed, leaning back against the car seat. "I don't know who I love most—David Velásquez or Bert Jefferson." Then she yawned.

"I don't care which one you love most," David said, "as long as you stay awake."

She looked at him from under half-closed eyelids. "Mmm. I think I can manage it."

When they got to the apartment, David asked Christy to wait in the living room for a moment. He went into the bedroom and emerged a minute later.

"C'mon," he said, taking her hand.

Christy stood in the doorway and looked around. "Oh," she breathed, "it's beautiful."

Around the room a dozen candle flames danced brightly, bathing everything in a warm, golden light. The Valentine roses Christy had given David filled the air with their delicate scent.

Christy turned to David and slipped her arms around his neck. "It's so perfect. I can't believe this is actually happening."

"Believe it," he said, pushing her hair back and kissing her neck. "Believe it."

THE END

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About the Author

Christine DeVault, an educational writer and former secondary school teacher, has authored or coauthored numerous middle school, high school and college texts, including six interactive books for Network Publications. With her husband Bryan Strong she is coauthor of *The Marriage and Family Experience*, a leading college textbook.

Step into the lives of Christy and David, a teenage couple whose whirlwind romance leads to serious choices about sexual involvement and birth control. Their story directly involves you because you make choices for them.

David was up late doing his homework. It took h longer than usual because he was having trouble co centrating. When he finally closed the last book, h sighed. I wish life was as easy as calculus, he thought. know I should go to a family planning clinic with Christy, would mean a lot to her and I might learn something to But I just can't see sitting in a waiting room with a bunch o women all looking at me. And what if somebody I know sees me there?

What did David do?

Choice Point 11A

If you think David decided *not* to go with Christy to th family planning clinic, turn to page 122.

Choice Point 11B

If you think David decided to go with Christy, turn to page 154.

Taking Chances With Sex presents accurate information about birth control methods and models a visit to a family planning clinic. It is part of the "Sexuality Decision-Making Series for Teens" that includes *Too Soon For Sex*, covering abstinence, and *Don't Let It Get Around*, covering sexually transmitted disease.

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